

Perish 106

Chapter 106: The First Target of Strategy_2

Hmm... For example, if you join the auxiliary troops of the Roman Army, your leaders can become high-level team officers in the auxiliary troops. After their service ends, they can not only become Roman citizens but also receive land and wealth... However, during the negotiations, to show your sincerity, your army must stay far from Canosa. Do... do you understand?"

Pigeris laughed, a bold and unrestrained laugh. "I think you've misunderstood. My Free Italy army has come here not to submit to Rome, but to assist the Apulians in their fight against Rome for independence!"

The administrative official's face turned deathly pale, and he shouted through gritted teeth, "Damn rebels, how dare you! This is Roman territory. If you don't surrender quickly, once Rome brings in their main army, you will all be nailed to the cross! Think carefully about this!"

Pigeris ignored him and swept his gaze across the Canosa officials and local council members in the hall. He announced in a loud voice, "We, Free Italy, are fighting for the independence of Apulia. Naturally, you Canossa people must contribute your share. Our leader hopes that you can provide 1,000 tons of wheat and 1,000 pounds of smoked meat... deliver these supplies to the military camp outside the city within two days. At that time, we will continue south to engage the Romans. Otherwise—" Pigeris snorted coldly, his threat unmistakable.

Everyone present turned pale. A lavishly dressed Canossa council member furrowed his brows and said sorrowfully, "There's no way we can gather so many supplies. Can't we reduce the amount—?"

"Canosa will never yield to the enemy! We absolutely will not agree to your unreasonable demands!" The administrative official responded firmly this time. He knew full well that if he did so, once he stepped down and returned to Rome, there would be dire consequences awaiting him.

Yet his resolute stand didn't stir any collective indignation among the others. On the contrary, everyone ignored him and began whispering among themselves, discussing in hushed tones.

Pigeris noticed this and his smile grew wider. "In two hours, our leader will lead the army and wait outside the city. We hope the envoy you send will provide him with a satisfactory answer."

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Pigeris left the city, letting out a long exhale before riding his horse straight toward the military camp three miles away.

Outside the central army tent in the camp, Maximus was waiting anxiously. When he spotted Pigeris' figure, he immediately strode forward to greet him. "Thank the heavens! Pigeris, you've finally returned safely! Any longer and we'd have deployed the army to Canosa to rescue you!"

Pigeris felt a wave of warmth in his heart and quickly said, "I didn't encounter any danger, thanks to the fact that the Canossa people were utterly terrified of our military might. They fear our siege; they wouldn't dare harm me even slightly."

Maximus laughed heartily. "Come, let's head to the tent so you can share with everyone what you witnessed inside Canosa City."

Inside the large tent, two groups of people were huddled together—one studying a chart of Canosa City, the other discussing various matters. Among them were several great captains under Maximus, such as Fesaros and Torrelugo, as well as key figures from Attutumus' army.

Maximus stepped into the tent and raised his voice. "Everyone, the brave Pigeris has returned safely. Let's have him share his observations from inside Canosa City."

The tent quickly fell silent, with all eyes turning toward him.

"Our earlier actions seem to have successfully misled the Canossa people," Pigeris began loudly. "Although Canosa City is relatively large, it doesn't appear to have many people inside. I saw them urgently recruiting city guards on the streets, some of whom were elderly with greying hair, wearing robes. This shows they lack enough young citizens to serve as soldiers, and they also lack sufficient armor to equip them. They haven't had time to gather reinforcements from other towns either. Both from the faces of their soldiers and their officials, I saw fear. The Canossa people lack the will to fight, and I believe we can successfully capture this city!"

"Leonidas, who recently joined us, wasn't wrong when he said the Apulia Region has been declining in recent years," Maximus remarked thoughtfully.

Marching from Benevento to here, Maximus could sense the sparsely populated Samnium Mountain Area. Though the Samnium region was famously barren, characterized by its poor soil, even the agriculturally and pastorally renowned Apulia Region was similarly desolate. It was evident that the Roman Senate had put considerable effort into guarding this region, which had opposed Rome during the Marci War.

According to Leonidas, after Rome's victory in the Marci War, they seized vast stretches of fertile land as public property under the pretext of punishing the Apulians. Additionally, Rome repeatedly offered generous wages to recruit a large number of Apulia's young and able-bodied men, drafting them into the Roman Army and sending them to fight in Little Asia... These measures undoubtedly weakened the strength of the Apulia Region, consolidating Rome's control. However, now they are to the advantage of the rebel army.

"Maximus, since the circumstances are favorable for us, let's besiege the city immediately!" Attutmus suggested heatedly, his gaze sharp.

"No need to rush. Whether or not we launch an attack depends on whether Canossa agrees to our demands," Maximus replied calmly.

"We deliberately asked for an excessive amount of supplies. There's no way the Canossa people can deliver," someone pitched in.

"That may be true," Maximus reasoned, "but since we've given them a deadline, it's better to wait for their response first. If the Apulians come to see us as deceitful or untrustworthy rebels, it could hinder our plans for the upcoming battles." Maximus advised.

"Fine, as you say," Attutmus agreed readily.

Though Attutmus was a straightforward man unaccustomed to academia, his decades of experience at sea had taught him one key truth: skilled captains must lead the ship and make sound judgments, experienced helmsmen must steer the course, and as the boatswain, he must rally the sailors in

wholehearted cooperation. Only then could the crew navigate safely and arrive at their destination successfully.

Even now, as a rebel leader, this principle continued to guide him. He knew his own shortcomings—his lack of strategic insight and expertise in commanding battles. Over the months, through careful observation, he had come to admire Spartacus' exceptional leadership among the rebel leaders, as well as Maximus' unique qualities. Young as Maximus was, he exuded boldness (his naval raid of Pompey made him the first rebel leader to conquer a town), command (his army rarely mistreated Campania civilians and adhered to rigorous military training), and orderliness (his camp operated in an organized manner, with trade ensuring sufficient supplies). These traits had convinced Attutmus to follow Maximus' lead during their southern campaign and heed his advice along the way.

"In fact, we could use more time to prepare for the siege. Although we began cutting timber before leaving the Samnium Mountain Area and had the engineering unit busy making wooden ladders and planks in the camp yesterday, the siege carriages are still complex in design. So far, we haven't managed to finish even one," Maximus pointed out.

Attutmus hadn't spoken before one of his subordinates interjected, "We don't need siege carriages. The Canossa people are few, and their defenses are lacking. If we storm the city in full force, we can easily take it."

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Maximus said seriously, "It's always good to be more prepared, to minimize the casualties of our brothers."

"Maximus, you're right. We aren't short on time; waiting a bit longer is completely fine," Attutmus quickly interjected.

Maximus looked at him and then at his several subordinates, his expression becoming solemn. "Leader Attutmus, I hope that after we capture Canosa, you will keep your promise and restrain your men from harassing and looting the city's residents."

As soon as these words were spoken, Attutmus knew things could get bad. Sure enough, before he could respond, several of his subordinates started shouting, "Leader Maximus, your request is too much! Ever since we entered the Samnium Mountain Area, you've been repeatedly asking us what not

to do, we've complied with each request, but our brothers' patience is limited. After breaking through the city, we can't make them do nothing, and we can't restrain them!"

"That's right! Leader Maximus, you need to understand that our boss is Brother Attutmus, not you! These days, we've given you a lot of face, don't demand too much, or else—hmph!"

"How dare you speak to our leader like that? Just shut up!" Torrelugo immediately yelled discontentedly, "This is something the two leaders have discussed. What right do you have to object here?"

"If it weren't for following Leader Maximus's advice, would you have passed through the Samnium Mountain Area so smoothly to get here?!" Fesaros chimed in sarcastically, "You'd probably still be getting dizzy in the mountains playing hide and seek with the Samnites. It's like drinking milk and forgetting your mother!"

"Everyone, stop arguing!" Maximus and Attutmus shouted almost in unison.

The military tent returned to quiet, but the leaders of both armies glared at each other, and the atmosphere was tense.

Maximus looked gravely at Attutmus and asked softly, "You didn't discuss this matter with your subordinates?"

Attutmus replied with some shame, "I discussed it with them most of last night, but most of them feel that the soldiers' patience has reached its limit. It's impossible to stop them from feasting when the prey is already at their mouths. I... I originally planned to tell you about this today, but I hadn't had the chance... just..."

Attutmus knew very well in his heart: it wasn't that he didn't have time, but he was worried Maximus might change his mind, so he didn't plan to say anything, intending to wait until after the city was captured to see the situation...

Maximus quietly looked at Attutmus until his face turned red, then sighed softly, "So that's how it is. It seems my request was too high... Since you can't do it, I won't force you..."

Hearing this, Attutmus became anxious and was about to argue when Maximus continued, "We are all poor brothers, Rome is our common enemy, we shouldn't argue over such trivial matters! Leader Attutmus, our prior agreement remains unchanged, after capturing Canosa, the city will be yours—"

"Leader!—" Fesaros, Torrelugo, and several Great Captains were about to voice their opposition when Maximus raised his hand, and they all fell silent.

Seeing this, Attutmus was somewhat envious: despite being young, Maximus was able to command the obedience of his subordinates, while his few companions, despite sharing hardships for over a decade, started giving him headaches within just a few months of becoming leaders of hundreds of soldiers...

In a moment's thought, Attutmus displayed a grateful expression, "Leader Maximus, this really is... Look, how about this, after we capture the city, we split the weapons and food in half—"

"Leader, you can't—" Several subordinates tried to stop him again, but Attutmus yelled angrily, "Shut up!"

Their startled looks made Fesaros burst into laughter.

Maximus coughed twice, speaking earnestly, "Leader Attutmus, your army lacks supplies and urgently needs replenishments, while we are not lacking for now, so I appreciate your gesture, but it's truly unnecessary!"

Maximus's sincere words left Attutmus so touched that he didn't know what to say, and even his few subordinates stopped clamoring, staring at the ground.

Maximus continued, "Leader Attutmus, why don't you return to camp to make siege preparations? Once the Envoy from Canosa arrives, I will send someone to notify you."

Taking the easy way out, Attutmus quickly agreed, "Maximus, you're right, we do need to prepare further."

He hurriedly left with his men, and only then did Torrelugo complain, "Attutmus's people can't keep their promise and still get so many benefits. Leader, aren't you being too generous!"

If it had been when Torrelugo first joined Maximus's group, his criticism would have been harsh, but now, it was a more polite expression of his discontent, indicating that Maximus's leadership had earned his full respect.

Looking at the dissatisfied Great Captains, Maximus explained with a smile, "I'm not being generous. You all know that Sarabia is our real target; the reason for the agreement with Attutmus is that after capturing Canosa, if Attutmus's army treats the city's residents well, perhaps when word spreads to other towns about our attack, they might not resist so stubbornly..."

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This is actually just an additional demand. Canosa will inevitably provide the resources to Attutmus, and his forces must be replenished and strengthened. Only then can they share our burden, ensuring that we are not isolated in Apulia. Our own development and expansion will also proceed more smoothly...

To be honest, since we started heading south, Attutmus has been willing to heed my advice, restrain his army, and allow us to smoothly arrive here. This has been far beyond our expectations! Think about it— if it had been Cross, Enomai, or even Antonix leading their armies south with us, would they have followed our suggestions? Would our march south have been this smooth?... So, Attutmus has already done his utmost. We cannot demand more from him.

Maximus's words dissolved the dissatisfaction of Torrelugo and Fesaros.

Indeed, Canosa sent an envoy to the rebel army's camp. While they obviously could not offer the vast resources demanded by the rebel army, they attempted to delay by negotiating. However, they were unaware that this was merely an excuse for Maximus and his men to mislead the opposing side. Using this as a pretense, they ignored the envoy's pleas and resolutely declared war on Canosa.

By the time this envoy fled back to the city in panic, the blaring sound of copper horns had already reverberated through the rebel army's camp.

Attutmus's forces primarily attacked the western side of Sarabia City. Maximus's army focused their efforts on the eastern side, while the southern side of Canosa City was mostly subjected to feint attacks

by Attutmus's army, with Maximus's army providing assistance (Attutmus's forces amounted to approximately 12,000 soldiers—double the number of Maximus's army). Only the northern side of Canosa City remained untouched, as its proximity to the Ophidus River hindered the deployment of attacking forces.

Maximus sat atop his horse, watching as his soldiers formed ranks about a mile east of the city walls: At the forefront were five crossbow cannons, followed by the sparse line formations of the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Battalions, each group of one hundred soldiers carrying a wooden ladder. Behind them were the First and Second Battalions serving as reserve forces.

Maximus decided to use these two elite battalions as reserves for two reasons: First, he was reluctant to expend their strength; second, he needed to preserve their capabilities for subsequent military operations.

From these two battalions, he also selected approximately 200 soldiers skilled in javelin throwing to assist in the attack.

Moreover, another elite battalion—the Guard Battalion—had been dispatched to the southern side of the city.

At the rear of the siege formation were the Medical Team, responsible for rescuing wounded soldiers, and over 300 impoverished recruits from the Apulia Region who had joined the army after entering Apulia. These recruits carried sacks filled with earth, their faces tense and apprehensive in stark contrast to the excited expressions of the front-line soldiers. However, they had no choice: Maximus had told them before the battle that, as newcomers to the army, they needed to prove their courage and loyalty.

While this was not Maximus's first time commanding a siege, it was his first time operating far from the main force, without a rear line or reinforcements. To ensure victory, he deployed nearly all his soldiers. Only 100 cavalry and over 100 youth soldiers remained guarding the camp. If the siege failed, the repercussions would be disastrous—a thought that weighed heavily on Maximus's mind.

Yet, even after the troops had formed their ranks, Maximus hesitated to order the assault.

Quintus couldn't help but prompt him, but Maximus softly replied, "Don't rush—wait until they've intensified their attack, and then we strike."

Quintus understood: Maximus wanted Attutmus's forces to initiate the assault first and draw Canosa's defensive troops westward, thereby reducing the pressure on his own forces during the attack.

While Quintus didn't object to this approach, the stark change in demeanor of the young leader—who had previously vowed in the war tent to fully support Attutmus's army—left him momentarily dazed...

Maximus didn't see helping Attutmus seize Canosa and minimizing his own troop casualties as conflicting objectives. He firmly believed that, given Attutmus and his subordinates' intense desire to capture Canosa City, their assault would be extraordinarily fierce.

Indeed, this turned out to be true. Attutmus concentrated 9,000 soldiers, and as soon as their ranks formed below the city walls, they surged toward Canosa's western fortifications like an unstoppable tide.

Approximately half an hour later, Maximus finally issued the command to attack.

The entire siege force began advancing slowly. Upon reaching roughly 200 meters from the city walls, they stopped, and the crossbow cannons unleashed their firepower.

Maximus's army was equipped with the lightweight crossbow cannons captured from the Roman Army during previous battles. After seizing Pompeii, they had collected numerous lead ingots, which were melted by blacksmiths into lead balls—leaving the Crossbow Cannon Team relatively well-stocked with ammunition.

However, lightweight crossbow cannons were typically used to inflict damage on enemy ranks, not against city walls. But lacking heavy-duty siege crossbow cannons, Maximus had no choice but to use the lightweight cannons to bombard the upper sections of Canosa's walls—hoping to intimidate the defending soldiers and cause the scattering stone fragments to pose a threat.

As the lead balls repeatedly struck the walls, large sections of the stone facade began to crumble and cascade downward—not only making the defending soldiers uneasy but also astonishing the rebel army troops.

In reality, the walls of Canosa City hadn't undergone repairs for nearly 20 years since the Marci War—an issue common among Italian towns. With Italians elevated to the status of Roman citizens under Roman rule and protection, there was little motivation to maintain fortifications. Who would dare voluntarily attack the Mediterranean-dominating Rome's Italian heartland? The Canossa people, enjoying their peace, had long abandoned the upkeep of their walls.

Another reason was that the Roman administrators sent to govern Canosa never proposed repairing the city's defenses. Ostensibly, they claimed this was to avoid wasting Canosa's manpower and resources, but the true reason was to suppress Canosa. During the Marci War, Canosa had been a significant force within the rebel army from the Apulia Region. Rome wished to prevent future uprisings by applying subtle measures.

Years of neglect had left the Canosa walls battered and eroded by the elements, with visible cracks and weaknesses. Additionally, the moat encircling Canosa City—4 meters deep and 4 meters wide—had been left unmaintained, causing sediment build-up and riverbank collapses that rendered some sections wadeable.

The Canossa people were now paying the price for their decade-long negligence.

After five rounds of crossbow cannon bombardment, the siege forces began advancing slowly. At the front, the soldiers were fully equipped. As they approached the moat, team officers shouted, "Raise shields!!"

The soldiers promptly raised their square shields overhead, covering their bodies beneath.

Soon enough, the defending soldiers launched volleys of javelins—some missing their mark, others embedding in the square shields, while only a few elicited cries of agony.

Facing long-range attacks, the rebel soldiers neither advanced nor retreated; they stayed positioned at the moat, enduring the rain of javelins.

"Ceasefire! Ceasefire! The enemy is depleting our javelins!..." The defending soldiers realized this tactic, and javelin throws soon halted.

"Leader, it's time to begin," Quintus observed and reminded him.

Maximus nodded and motioned to Akegu, who was serving as the Orderly.

The order was swiftly relayed to the newly recruited Apulians.

"Brothers, it's our turn now! Don't panic—stick close to the person in front of you. Run to the riverbank and toss the sacks into the river before retreating. Remember!" a newly appointed Centurion shouted.

"You better damn well be brave! If I see anyone disgrace us Apulians, I swear I'll make them pay!" another Centurion growled menacingly.

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More than 300 newly recruited Apulians were divided into two teams, moving as quickly as possible through the gaps in the front line to reach the moat and throw in sacks...

The soldiers defending the city, seeing this situation from the city walls, hurriedly threw down javelins, and the cries of agony were noticeably more than before...

Maximus, at the rear, heard these sounds and remained relatively calm. Having lived in this era and experienced many wars, he had become somewhat indifferent to death.

Some of the newly recruited Apulian soldiers were hit by javelins and fell by the moat, but the sacks they threw had already paved two paths in the moat (on either side of the moat, centered on the city gate). The rebel soldiers closest to the passageways shouted, charged across the moat, reached the city wall, and leaned the ladders they carried against the wall...

At the same time, stones rained down from the city, amid the screams, the real siege battle officially commenced...

Meanwhile, Maximus came before the Apulia New Recruits who had retreated from the front lines and said sincerely, "Brothers, thanks to your brave efforts, the army has successfully crossed the moat. On behalf of the entire army, I thank you! Don't worry; the Medical Team will soon take care of the

wounded brothers. Rest well for now, the Supply Team will bring you food and water to replenish your strength, and let's wait for the news of our victory!"

The startled Apulia New Recruits, hearing Maximus's comforting words, gradually calmed down. Someone shouted loudly, "Leader... Leader if we capture Canosa, can I go and kill that heartless merchant, Caso Dotos! He took away my land and forced my family to death, I will never let him go!"

His words immediately resonated with the others.

"Of course, you can! As long as the situation is true, you all can take revenge on your enemies, our army is here to speak for the poor!" Maximus promised without hesitation, not mentioning any public trials or the like, after all, once Canosa City was captured, it fell under the rebel army, and since they were already prepared to loot the city, a few murders shouldn't be an issue.

The recruits instantly became excited, the previous person continued, "Leader, after capturing the city, can I reclaim my previous land?"

Maximus's smile froze slightly, his mind racing, considering how to respond, another recruit gave the person who spoke a slap and said, "Proconsus, are you stupid! We are going to war with the Romans now, if we don't thoroughly defeat them, even if you have the land, it will be taken from you, and you might end up on a cross!"

With these words, not only did Proconsus scratch his head, others who intended to ask the same question fell silent.

Maximus looked with interest at the middle-aged man who helped him out, "What's your name?"

"Onomax, from Asculum, joined the Marci War when I was young, just appointed as the temporary Centurion of this unit two days ago." The middle-aged man solemnly replied.

Maximus approvingly nodded at him, then called out, "Everyone have a good rest!" After speaking, he turned and left, the smile on his face quickly disappearing, replaced by a solemn expression.

From his understanding of the southern recruits who joined the army late in Campania and the Apulians who came to join recently, most of these new recruits were landless wanderers, herders, and some poor sailors, with very few slaves.

One reason is that slaves face many restrictions and cannot escape far to Campania. But there's another reason. The southern Italian mountains have little flat land, unlike Campania's large estates, thus not capable of holding many slaves. City State citizens usually have only two or three slaves, tending to small plots, creating close relationships between master and servant. Slave escapes were not as common as in Campania.

But southern Italy has its own problems. The influx of cheap provincial agricultural products spread throughout most of Italy, farmers struggled to survive, relied on debt, and eventually had to sell their land. Such situations were common in much of Italy, but the southern Italian issue was that they were previously only allies of Rome, unable to enjoy the benefits of Rome's victories, acquiring more land, gifting land to landless Roman soldiers, or establishing colonial cities, thus southern Italian towns' landless poor issues were much more severe than those in the Latium Region and Campagna Region. Even relatively well-developed agricultural and pastoral Apulia Region was the same.

The Southern Italian poor joining the rebel army had more demands than slaves, just like the new recruits earlier. Many of them hoped to find the wealthy people who conspired to take their land and take revenge, and more hoped to regain land in their homeland...

When someday, the rebel army decides to march north, leaving Italy, into the rugged mountains, will these people be willing to leave?... Maximus began to have this concern in his heart.

Maximus hurried back to his command position, once again turning his attention to the battlefield ahead: wood ladders were already erected on the city wall, soldiers clung to them like ants, ascending cautiously with square shields, occasionally soldiers being struck by pieces of wood or rolling stones, screaming as they fell down... Sometimes, entire ladders were pushed away by the city's enemy troops, collapsing and crushing a group of soldiers... What scared him the most was the enemies on the city wall occasionally throwing down burning oil pots, turning rebel soldiers into human torches, screaming as they leapt into the moat...

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Of course, the defending soldiers did not go unscathed. The javelins thrown by the rebel army's javelin throwers positioned by the moat inflicted casualties upon them, but compared to the rebel soldiers' losses, theirs were significantly fewer.

Siege warfare was, by its very nature, a bloody and brutal affair. Although Maximus had already experienced it once (not counting the surprise attack on Pompeii), he still struggled to fully adapt. He forced himself not to avert his gaze and to scrutinize the soldiers in combat, trying his best to remain calm. Yet his lack of experience made it difficult for him to discern any key points, and instead, he found his mood becoming increasingly restless.

"Quintus, how is the situation now?" he couldn't help but ask.

"Leader, judging from the current battle situation, what Pigeris had previously reported turned out to be true. The Canossa people were deceived by our earlier actions and have not fully prepared for city defense," Quintus said seriously, gesturing toward the battlefield ahead. "Look, our soldiers are clustered under the city walls. If the enemy were to throw javelins now, they could cause us significant casualties, but they haven't. What does this indicate? The Canossa people may have already run out of javelins.

Not only that, but they haven't even set up cauldrons to boil water along the city walls. Pouring boiling water is far more cost-effective than using oil, and it can be used continuously. Although fire attacks are formidable, judging by the current state, their oil reserves likely aren't substantial.

Furthermore, you see, the wood and stones they're dropping are primarily focused on the few dozen wooden ladders we're using to attack. There's very little action on the other parts of the wall. This suggests that their defensive forces are inadequate, forcing them to focus on key areas of defense..."

Upon hearing this, Maximus's expression slightly relaxed. "So, does that mean we're likely to take this city today?"

"The Canossa people are ill-prepared and lack sufficient forces. Facing our all-out assault, it will be difficult for them to hold their ground. However—" Quintus added cautiously, "the Canossa soldiers aren't as weak as we initially assumed. Their defensive organization is rather decent; we haven't managed to reach the top of the city walls yet."

"Perhaps that's because we haven't gone all out just yet." Maximus thought for a moment and shouted, "Akegu! Immediately head west and inform Leader Attutmus to have the southern feinting forces begin their attack on the city as well, to disperse the enemy's forces."

"Yes!" Akegu immediately rode off on horseback.

"Since Canosa City belongs to them, they should put in their full effort to hold it," Maximus muttered under his breath, refraining from issuing an order for an all-out attack from his own forces.

Just then, Casius reported loudly, "Leader, Flanitnus has just sent word that the engineering team has completed manufacturing a siege carriage and that it's being urgently transported here."

"This is fantastic news!" Maximus exclaimed excitedly. "Tell Flanitnus to transport the siege carriage to the southern side of Canosa City and have Attutmus's soldiers use it to attack the city gate!"

"Understood!"

Maximus's main forces were attacking the eastern city walls. Why, then, would the siege carriage be directed to the southern wall? Because Canosa City had three exits. The Minucia Avenue runs north to south, so there were city gates on both the northern and southern walls, connected by stone bridges over the moat. The other exit was the river port, situated on the northern side of the city and surrounded by walls.

Why, then, did the rebel army not concentrate its forces on attacking the southern part of Canosa?

Because the southern wall was located on a major avenue frequented by merchants daily. Out of vanity, the Canossa people had allocated resources to maintain it, leaving the southern wall in better condition compared to the eastern and western walls. Additionally, a watchtower stood atop the southern gate, flanked by turrets on both sides. If the rebel soldiers crossed the stone bridge, they would undoubtedly be subjected to concentrated attacks by the defenders, leading to severe casualties. After extensive deliberation, this current attack strategy was chosen.

"Now that the Canossa people have exhausted their javelins and likely have little fuel left, the deployment of the siege carriage at this moment should prove effective," Quintus remarked from nearby.

Maximus nodded and said with a hint of expectation, "I just wonder how our soldiers who infiltrated the city are faring. If they can play their part, taking this city will be no problem at all."

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Back when the rebel army was still marching through the Samnium Mountain Area, Maximus and Attutmus had already agreed after discussions that their first target upon entering the Apulia Region would be Canosa. Based on intelligence gathered from various sources, Quintus had led the staff to draft an initial attack plan. However, Maximus later proposed a "small" suggestion: while the Canossa people were unaware of the rebel army's threat and remained complacent, a small team would be sent ahead to infiltrate the city and coordinate with the outside forces at the crucial moment to secure the city.

Quintus, Flanitnus, and others—with years of experience in the Roman Army and expertise in direct frontal assaults—had their eyes light up at this proposal. They found Maximus's approach to be a brilliant application of their earlier tactics from the surprise attack on Pompeii. However, what they didn't know was that Maximus had simply recalled the strategies employed by Nu'er Hachi during the late Ming era. His success in capturing numerous Ming strongholds in the Northeast had contributed to the rise of the Qing dynasty.

After careful deliberation, the leaders of Maximus's army decided that Albazus—who had long made a living as a street performer in towns and was known for his eloquence—would lead a team of thirty soldiers disguised as a caravan selling wheat. They would quietly advance ahead, while the rebel forces deliberately slowed their march.

According to reports from scouts, this caravan had successfully entered the city three days prior...

At this very moment, the secret detachment on Maximus's mind had just endured a false alarm.

After entering Canosa City, Albazus and his group lodged at a trade inn, presenting themselves as the steward of a Roman Noble who had come to the Samnium Mountain Area to buy grain. They claimed that the invasion by the rebel army had blocked their route, forcing them to come here. To avoid further losses, they stated that they were willing to sell their wheat at a reduced price.

Though the prices were lowered, the Apulia Region's agricultural and pastoral conditions were already favorable. Canosa City had a relatively small population and no real shortage of grain. Moreover, with

news of the rebel invasion spreading, panic among the people deterred any buyers. This allowed Albazus and his men to linger in the city without suspicion.

It wasn't until today, when the rebel army began its assault, that Albazus gathered his soldiers and prepared to retrieve the short swords hidden in their wagons, awaiting the right moment to launch a surprise attack. However, just then, a City Guard Officer arrived at the inn, startling Albazus and making him think their cover had been blown.

Once the leaders of the various trade caravans staying at the inn had gathered, the City Guard Officer announced that due to insufficient defensive forces, the Canosa Governor hoped the merchants remaining in the city could provide manpower to assist in its defense.

Why was it a "hope" and not a "demand"? Because the Canosa Governor knew that merchant caravans capable of long-distance trade were either wealthy elites from other cities or had some connections to the Roman Nobles. He was wary of creating unnecessary trouble for himself.

Some caravan leaders outright refused, reasoning that since the rebel army had not entirely surrounded the city, they could easily escape via the river port with minimal losses.

To everyone's surprise, Albazus gave an impassioned speech about how "as Roman citizens, it is our duty to contribute to our country in times of crisis," leaving the others with no room to decline.

The City Guard Officer was overjoyed and promptly equipped Albazus and his caravan members with shields and long spears. They were soon sent, along with other recruited individuals, to the western city wall.