

Perish 96

Chapter 96: Accident_2

Tini Bazus was waiting in the yard, wandering idly around the wooden racks. He noticed that in front of each shelf, there was a wooden sign carved with different symbols.

Could this mark the battalion or Centurion group to which these weapons and armor belong? ... thought Tini Bazus, yearning even more to learn to read. Fortunately, his application had been approved, and in a few days, he could participate every evening in the study group organized by Clerk Volenus.

At that moment, he heard arguing from inside the house, followed by a scream.

Something happened?! ... He was startled, hesitated a bit, and then rushed into the main house.

As he stepped into the house, a wave of heat hit his face. In the center of the room was a tightly built half-person-high round furnace made of stone bricks, with a suspended chimney passage above it. The flames roared inside, and neatly arranged short swords were stuck around its edges... Lying on the ground beside the furnace was a robust young man in a leather robe, trembling all over, his face contorted in pain. Beside him knelt an elderly man also in a leather robe, over fifty years old, using both hands to hold down the struggling young man, his expression worried and anxious, yet continuously comforting him, "Son, it's okay, it's okay, hang in there a bit longer, just a little longer, it'll be fine..."

"Teacher, the water is here!" Another brawny man rushed in with a bucket of well water.

The old man immediately lifted the leather robe on the young man, exposing a pair of bare legs.

Only then did Tini Bazus notice a large black wound on the man's left thigh, with the flesh around it turned out and shriveled like charcoal, shocking to see.

"Quick, pour it on!" the old man urged anxiously.

A bucket of icy well water was poured directly onto his leg, and the young man screamed, "Ah," but his expression slightly relaxed.

"Teacher, the ash is here," Endias came over to the middle-aged man, hands cradling a black powder.

"The flesh is charred, what's the use of ash!" the old man turned and shouted at Endias.

Endias was at a loss for words.

"What happened?" Tini Bazus asked Endias in a low voice.

Seeing him, Endias felt as if he had seen a savior and quickly whispered the events to him.

It turned out that the two blacksmiths in this shop were a father and son. When faced with the knives and spears of the rebel army, the older father, Pessianaxis, chose to submit, but the youthful son Pasipidas was brimming with resentment. That morning, he witnessed neighbors being driven from the city, fueling his anger.

Just then, Endias came in with a short sword to inform the blacksmith Pessianaxis, which was an ordinary process, but it clashed with Pasipidas's fiery mood. He cursed the rebel army for treating them like slaves, commanding them at will, and in his anger, he snatched the short sword from Endias's hands, throwing it aside forcefully. Unexpectedly, it struck the handle of another short sword embedded in the furnace, causing it to fly back at Pasipidas. Unable to dodge in time, he watched helplessly as the red-hot blade pierced through the sturdy leather robe and into his thigh, causing him to scream and collapse to the ground...

"It was just an accident, nothing to do with you," Tini Bazus softly reassured.

The worry on Endias's face slightly diminished.

"Son, how are you?!" Pessianaxis's urgent shout once again drew Tini Bazus's attention.

"Pain... pain..." Pasipidas's teeth chattered, his expression turning painful and contorted again. He reached to scratch the wound, but his father promptly blocked him.

The skin around the wound had turned bright red, like a boiled shrimp, and the redness continued to spread outward...

The old blacksmith had forged for decades, had bumps and bruises, but had never seen such a severe injury, and with it being on his son, he was desperately anxious, yet clueless about what to do, simply holding down his son's hands tightly, his eyes brimming with tears...

Tini Bazus could not help but suggest, "Don't waste time here, take him to the Medical Team quickly!"

"Medical Team?" The old blacksmith looked at Tini Bazus with confusion. He had noticed this fully armored soldier come in, but had been too preoccupied with his son's injury to pay attention to him.

"In the Maximus Army, we have a Medical Team with excellent medical skills! Many soldiers who were severely injured have recovered completely after their treatment," Tini Bazus stated, confident he was speaking truthfully and with no exaggeration.

Hearing this, hope lit up in the old blacksmith's eyes, though he still worried, "Will they treat... my son?"

"Of course they will!" Tini Bazus gave him a confirmed reply. "Quick, pick him up. Let's hurry to the Medical Team, don't delay!"

The old blacksmith did not hesitate any longer, immediately calling a few apprentices to lift his son onto their backs. They hurried out of the blacksmith shop, following Tini Bazus toward the Medical Team stationed in the mansion of the wealthy district...

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In the Pompeii City Hall, Maximus convened all the leaders of his subordinate troops for an internal meeting.

"... Above is the adjustment I made in response to the previous Military Commander Conference's resolution and for the future development of our team. If anyone has any opinions, feel free to bring them up, and we can discuss them together," Maximus said, looking around at everyone.

Everyone was a bit surprised after hearing Maximus's words, except for a few responsible for military affairs like Military Officer Frantinus, Quintus, Chief of Staff, Military Judge Sedonius, Fesaros, Torrelugo, Camillus, and Oluus, the four Great Captains, who had attended the meeting two days prior and already asked their questions. Today, aside from reviewing the content, they were also witnessing Leader Maximus's adjustments to the logistics departments.

The hall fell into a temporary silence as everyone, after the initial shock, began to carefully consider how Maximus's decisions would impact themselves and the team.

Predictably, the first to question was Acronis, "Leader, you mentioned earlier that each team will be independent in the future and must establish its own Supply Camp, and our kitchen will only provide meals for our own team. Does this mean the personnel originally stationed at other teams' camps to cook can be brought back?"

Facing his capable subordinate, Maximus patiently explained, "Our Supply Camp originally provided logistical support for the entire team. Now, as each battalion separates, there is no requirement to divide the entire Supply Camp and assign it to each team, which is already a leniency granted to us by Spartacus and other leaders. Naturally, we should respond amicably by helping them establish their own Supply Camp.

Your previous subordinates have already been stationed in their camps for several months and are well acquainted with their teams. Why not persuade them to remain and assist their teams in quickly establishing their own complete chef teams?"

Acronis reluctantly mumbled, "Many of them are very capable, and I was hoping they would return, so in the future..."

"Since you were able to train so many capable subordinates in a few short months previously, I believe with your ability, you can train even more in the future, so there's no need to worry about that," Maximus reassured gently. "Moreover, after our team becomes independent, the kitchen you are responsible for will not shrink; its size will actually expand, keeping you busy in the future."

Acronis smiled, "Leader, I understand, and I'll do my best to accomplish what you've instructed!"

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Maximus understood Acronis's work style, and when she promised something, she would strive to fulfill it. He reminded her again: "If your subordinates insist on returning to our team, don't force them to stay. Instead, send someone willing to go."

"Yes."

"For the teams of the other leaders, the most important aspect of the supply camp they are now establishing is twofold—eating and storing supplies. The kitchen will be managed by Acronis, and you two need to help them with the storeroom side," Maximus said, directing his gaze at Capito and Gaius.

This time, with the adjustments to the logistics departments, the team responsible for the kitchen remained unchanged. However, the teams managing the supply warehouse and the weapons warehouse were merged, and the transport and livestock teams were also added, suddenly making the team as large as the kitchen's. Capito was appointed as the warehouse supervisor, and Gaius as the deputy supervisor.

When this appointment was announced, a few were surprised, as Gaius had been working in the supply camp since the rebel army was first established, while the newcomer Capito had a position above him. But Gaius remained calm and said nothing, so they found no need to make a fuss.

"That's not a problem. In the last few days, many people have joined our team, and quite a few have been assigned to our warehouse, including some who can write and calculate. We have enough manpower and will quickly divide the various supplies into six parts for the other teams to take. However, in terms of weapons and equipment, everything has already been distributed to the soldiers. There are only a few Crossbow Cannons left in the warehouse. If they want them, one team can take one each, but I think they won't find them useful, as they can't shoot accurately without long practice."

Capito's tone showed disdain for the other teams: "As for material transportation and storage, the other teams have actually had them for a long time. Previously, when they went out to loot, they often left some supplies at their camps, and only the rest were sent to our supply camp. So I don't think they will come to us for people in this regard. Even if they do, I won't give them any. Of course, I will send people to teach them how to manage supplies more effectively and how to transport supplies smoothly when marching and keeping up with the team, but I don't think they will necessarily learn."

Despite Capito's sarcastic tone, which made some people's faces in the hall look unhappy, Maximus didn't mind. He was pleased that Capito had considered all the issues without his prompting, which was the proactive work attitude he desired.

Thinking of this, he glanced at Gaius beside him.

Gaius sensed Maximus's gaze and slowly said, "I will assist Capito in smoothly completing the supply handover with the other teams."

At this moment, a voice suddenly arose: "Leader, is our livestock team going to be disbanded?"

Maximus looked up, and the speaker was Seksepis, the captain of the livestock team, whose face was now filled with unease and pleading.

"Of course not!" Maximus shouted earnestly, "Livestock farming is the most important part of our future in agriculture. In the future, we not only need to eat our fill, but we also need to eat meat and wear warm woolen clothes. This relies on your livestock team!—" At this point, he paused, seeing the eyes of some in the hall begin to light up, evidently invigorated by the future he intentionally painted.

Then he continued in a gentler tone, "But now we're at war with the Roman Army, and it will continue for a long time. Perhaps in a few months, the entire force will march south, so what will happen to your large herd of sheep then?"

Seksepis hesitated for a moment, then said, "We...we can also successfully drive them south."

"We might encounter battles during the march. After all, sheep are not as obedient as people, and they would slow down the entire team and put everyone in danger," Maximus patiently explained. "Besides, your herd of cattle and sheep needs to be evenly distributed to the other teams this time, with about a few hundred left. The cattle, we will keep to carry supplies when we march; the majority of the sheep should be slaughtered at once to make cured meat, which can be preserved longer—by the way, how many people are currently in your livestock team?"

Seksepis had a somewhat dejected expression as he replied with difficulty, "...20 people."

"What kinds of sheep do you have?"

"Epirus Sheep, Galgano Sheep, Gallian Goat, Caprasia Goat..." As he spoke of his sheep, Seksepis recited them like treasures, specially reminding, "Especially the Galgano Sheep, which are very precious. We only have about 20, and killing them for meat would be too wasteful."

"You can select a few pairs of each kind of sheep, not exceeding 30 in total, for your livestock team to continue raising. What you will need to do in the future is to mate and breed them."

"Mate and breed?" Seksepis said, somewhat confused.

"Well...it's a way for us to control and cultivate new types of good sheep. Don't know if you're willing to do it?" Maximus tried to use language the other could understand to explain.

In his previous life, he wasn't a graduate from an agricultural university, but he had been carefully reading Cato's book "On Agriculture" and, combining it with knowledge he learned from the internet, decided to have the livestock team, now without many sheep and with free time, try this. After all, many people could graze, but few in this era knew how to mate and breed, making it an initiative sparked by a whim, but also laying the groundwork for the future.

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"I am willing!" Seksepis answered without hesitation. As a shepherd slave who had endured hardship and discrimination, the rebel army rescued him, and Maximus granted him rights, allowing him to gain respect and realize his own value. Thus, he was willing to do anything for the team, not to mention that Maximus's words had greatly piqued his interest in animal husbandry.

"Good, we'll talk in detail after the meeting," Maximus nodded in satisfaction.

"Leader, what if other teams want to take our Medical Team members?" Horace, the head of the Medical Team, finally interjected.

"Don't agree!" Maximus answered firmly, "They can send people over to learn, but not a single person from the Medical Team can be taken. Our Medical Team has only just taken shape, the doctors and nurses have started to grow and cooperate well, which is no easy feat—we cannot let them dismantle the Medical Team! I believe the Medical Team members wouldn't want to leave for other teams either. Of course, based on brotherly camaraderie, if other teams have severely injured soldiers, we should still do our utmost to accept them..."

"Understood," Horace breathed a sigh of relief.

"Leader, you know, I've already set agreements with a few merchants from the south, yet the supplies stored in the camp are to be divided equally now. I fear that when they deliver the goods we need back to the harbor, we won't have enough wine to exchange..." Commerce Officer Pigeris said worriedly.

Maximus IV responded calmly, "You don't need to worry about this. We can use other materials in exchange for the wine allotted to other teams, or we can promise other leaders that if they share wine with us, we'll give them a portion of the exchanged goods. So, you must strengthen your contact with Capito. When other leaders come to claim supplies, you need to be present to negotiate smoothly with them."

"Besides, if we don't have enough wine for trade, it's not a problem because we have money. We can use money to buy their remaining goods."

Maximus spoke with confidence, for after breaking into Pompeii and ravaging the wealthy district, his team had seized enough gold, silver, and copper coins. Moreover, he had no intention of distributing this wealth to the other leaders. In fact, the other leaders hadn't even realized they could use money to purchase goods, as they were accustomed to obtaining supplies through plunder.

"... When you need money or decide on the quantity of goods to purchase, make a list and submit it for my approval before heading to Magus to collect the funds."

When Magus heard Maximus mention his name, he immediately raised his head, but seeing everyone's eyes focused on him, he shrank back once again.

Indeed, the young Magus attended Maximus Army's leadership meeting. It wasn't just him; there were also Akegu, Casius, Gaurus, and Manas—four other youths. They were all appointed as the Chief's Attendants by Maximus.

But Maximus didn't intend for them to serve him personally. He wanted them to handle tasks on his behalf, such as recording meetings, drafting documents, conveying orders, acting as his eyes and ears... Compared to others, as their teacher, Maximus understood and trusted this group of young students more deeply. This was also a way to cultivate them at a higher level.

Among these five children, Magus had a strong sense of principles and would prioritize duty over personal relationships if required. His arithmetic skills were solid, so Matthias considered letting him manage the military's finances. After all, financial power is crucial for any organization and must be kept under the control of the most trusted individuals.

To account for the perceptions of subordinates, Maximus didn't establish the position of Treasurer to appoint Magus officially, but in essence, Magus was fulfilling the responsibilities of that role. However, if he didn't perform well, Maximus could replace him at any time.

"Understood, I will follow your instructions to ensure this transaction with the southern merchants is successfully completed." Pigeris felt reassured. He had earlier been troubled by this matter, but Maximus casually provided several solutions, further deepening his admiration for the young leader.

"Leader Maximus, now that the other teams have also entered the city, should our Military Law Team still maintain order within the city as before?" Military Judge Sedonius raised a question.

Maximus pondered for a moment before saying, "After Free Italy's entire force entered Pompeii, the city no longer belongs solely to us but is managed jointly by all leaders. In my opinion, you should maintain order within our own ranks, as you did at the original base. As for other teams, their affairs are beyond our jurisdiction."

"To be frank, only Spartacus's team maintains some semblance of discipline; the others are lacking, especially the soldiers under Cross and Enomai," Sedonius said with a serious expression. "Now, with tens of thousands of soldiers crowded into a small city, if discipline isn't strictly enforced and order within the city collapses, it could lead to chaos."

His words caught Maximus's attention. He straightened up and said gravely, "You're correct. I'll bring this up at the Military Commander Conference to urge the leaders to strengthen control over their soldiers and maintain order within the city."

He then sighed softly, "The truth is, our forces are still too weak. If we had tens of thousands of soldiers, we wouldn't need to invite other teams to occupy this city. Now that we can directly recruit new soldiers, everyone must act proactively to promote our team—to attract as many slaves and poor people rushing here as possible to join us. Volenus, this task will be primarily entrusted to you."

This time, Maximus appointed Volenus as a civil affairs officer, with two main responsibilities: first, organizing learning sessions for soldiers to eliminate illiteracy as much as possible; second, managing the administrative affairs of the entire army. As for the clerk position's original duties of recording and archiving, these were now assigned to the attendants—primarily Casius, due to his excellent writing skills, attention to detail, and patience.

"Yes, Leader!" Volenus responded, then reminded, "Ever since we broke into Pompeii, I believe more people will be compelled to come to us. We won't have much trouble recruiting soldiers; rather, I'm worried that too many people will join and strain our supplies."

"Volenus is right. Everyone should take notice, especially the kitchen and warehouse. Providing for several thousand people and tens of thousands requires vastly different arrangements. How can we ensure everyone eats promptly and receives sufficient essential supplies? You all need to come up with solutions," Maximus said earnestly, looking at Acronis and Capito.

Acronis looked somewhat nervous, but Capito remained calm and composed.

"Of course, we also need to acquire more supplies." Maximus lightly tapped the wooden table and said with emphasis, "Previously, the leaders Cross and Enomai suggested leading their forces to attack small towns on the Campagna Plain. These towns are less fortified than coastal ones and are sparsely populated—easier to conquer. I think this is a solid plan. Now that the farming estates across the Southern Campania Plain have been largely depleted, to secure more resources, we must consider directly capturing some towns."

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Maximus continued: "Quintus, your staff must take responsibility to choose a target and formulate a plan. Flanitnus, you need to oversee the army's intensified training. And Adrius and Scapula, based on

the operational plans, lead the engineering team to prepare for the construction of siege weapons. I hope our troops can secure victory in their very first direct siege battle and once again establish the reputation of our army!"

Those named, including Quintus, immediately perked up and responded in unison: "Yes, Leader!"

After the meeting ended, everyone dispersed.

Following the adjustments Maximus made to his troops the day before, he also completed the reorganization of the logistics department. The resulting central officials are as follows: Chief's Attendants (multiple), Civil Affairs Officer Vallerus, actual Financial Officer Magus, actual Clerk Casius, Commerce Officer Pigeris.

The four subordinate departments include: the kitchen, led by Acronis; the warehouse, managed by Capito, with deputy Gaius; the engineering team, captained by Adrius with deputy Spukala; and the medical team, led by Captain Horace and Nurse Chief Nexia.

"Children, how do you feel attending your first meeting?" Maximus turned to look at the five young boys standing behind him, his face kind and approachable, completely different from the stern demeanor during the meeting earlier.

"Teacher, I feel great, like I've grown up overnight!" Akegu said loudly.

"Akegu, remember what the old... Leader reminded us before. In formal occasions, we must call him Leader; how could you forget?" Casius quickly reminded.

Maximus laughed and waved it off: "It's okay, it's okay. Now that only we are in the room, you can call me Teacher; it feels more intimate that way."

"Hear that, Casius the nagger." Akegu rolled his eyes at him.

Casius responded with a warm smile and said nothing.

"Teacher, I'm a bit scared, worried I won't handle so much money well," Magus said uneasily.

"No need to worry. As long as you strictly follow the financial management methods I've put in place — verify the inflow and outflow of every coin and item carefully, keep clear records, and conduct regular inventories — you shouldn't make mistakes..." Maximus said gently. "Even if mistakes arise, it's okay. As long as you actively correct them, Teacher will forgive you. You should all be bold in your duties, don't be afraid of making mistakes! If something goes wrong, Teacher will back you up!"

Hearing this, the five youths visibly relaxed.

Maximus added with heartfelt sincerity: "I hope you all take your time as attendants seriously, grow quickly, and prepare yourselves to shoulder greater responsibilities in the future — to help Teacher lead our forces out of the Romans' encirclement and rebuild our homeland!"

These honest words from Maximus touched the boys deeply; their hearts grew heavy with a profound sense of duty. In unison, they vowed: "Teacher, we won't disappoint you!"

As the mentor-disciple atmosphere grew warm, someone suddenly burst into the room. "Leader Maximus, there's something I need to discuss with you."

Maximus looked up. "Torrelugo, what is it?"

"It's like this — recently, our Second Brigade has been responsible for overseeing the blacksmith shop..." Torrelugo proceeded to explain the situation of blacksmith Pasipidas getting injured.

Maximus listened calmly, then looked toward the five boys and asked: "What's your opinion on this matter?"

Akegu and his peers, new to the team's management affairs, were clueless about what to say.

This was already within Maximus's expectations, so he spoke softly: "Our team lacks weapons and equipment. Blacksmiths are talent we desperately need — we only managed to acquire two in Pompeii. To prevent them from escaping, I've stationed soldiers to guard them. At the same time, to keep them

working for us, or even potentially joining us in the future, I ordered the soldiers to guarantee their safety and show them respect. This challenging task falls to the Second Brigade—"

"This task is indeed difficult!" Torrelugo interjected.

Maximus glanced at him and continued: "...The soldier who sent the short sword for repairs complied strictly with the shop's rules, committing no wrongdoing. Furthermore, after the accident, he promptly sent the injured blacksmith to the medical team. Not only should he not be penalized, but he deserves commendation—"

Hearing this, Torrelugo visibly relaxed.

"As for the blacksmith apprentice speaking up on behalf of the soldier, he wasn't wrong either. The apprentices are former slaves — they're one of us. Once trained, they'll sincerely craft weapons for our cause. Hence, instead of criticizing him, we should offer comfort. Truthfully, the blacksmith's injury falls on himself. While this incident was coincidental, it reveals his resentment towards us; if it hadn't happened today, something similar might have occurred another day—"

"Leader Maximus, what you say is absolutely right!" Torrelugo praised immediately.

"Though he brought this upon himself, he's injured now. To prevent his father from using this as an excuse to refuse further cooperation, I must go to the medical team now to visit the injured blacksmith. Moreover, I'll urge Captain Horace to give his best effort in treating him and insist that he's well cared for during recovery. I hope these actions will improve their impression of our team—"

Maximus looked at the five boys intently listening. "Akegu, head over to Capito, the warehouse supervisor, and relay my orders. The blacksmith shop will now fall under his jurisdiction. He should go to the medical team to offer condolences to the injured blacksmith."

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"Yes, Chief!" Akegu responded loudly, his tone filled with excitement.

"Torrelugo." Maximus looked at the most senior warrior in the group and spoke sternly, "Although your squad's soldiers didn't make mistakes at the blacksmith's shop, they still failed during their duty. If they

had promptly noticed the resentment this injured blacksmith harbored toward us during their watch and reported it in time, we could've taken measures to resolve the issue and avoided such a situation. Do you agree?"

Thinking the matter was already over, Torrelugo scratched his head in embarrassment and said sheepishly, "You're right. Next time we'll definitely learn from this."

Maximus nodded, standing up, "Let's go to the medical team."

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Near Capua, the rebel army annihilated the main force of the Roman Army, forcing Valerius to lead his cavalry and supply team back to Rome.

The citizens, upon hearing the grim news, were both shocked and furious, and protested to the Senate, demanding severe punishment for Valerius.

The Senate, responding to the people's demands, quickly passed a resolution, citing "Valerius' cowardice, failure to personally command the army in battle, and resulting in the catastrophic defeat of the legions." He was stripped of his Senate seat and expelled from Rome.

Although Valerius was scapegoated to vent the public's anger, many senators came to realize through the devastating defeat of the Roman Army that the rebel army was not merely a group of unruly rabble but a force with remarkable combat capabilities. Hence, the decision to "reorganize the army and march to Campania to suppress the rebels" was swiftly approved, along with the proactive dispatching of personnel to scout the rebel forces.

Days later, the gathered intelligence shocked the Senate: the rebel army's numbers had exceeded ten thousand, with a continuous stream of people joining daily. They had built large-scale camps in the Vesuvius Region and were conducting military training daily...

A rebel army with organizational capabilities garnered even greater attention from the Senate. They determined to intensify recruitment efforts; however, before these measures could be enacted, another shocking piece of news arrived: Pompeii had fallen!

When Roman spies received this information, Pompeii's citizens had not yet been expelled from the city, leaving the senators unaware of the full details of its capture. They instinctively believed it must have been taken by force.

The rebels possessed siege capabilities! The Roman senators' concern about the rebels deepened further, prompting them to issue new recruitment orders to towns across the Latium Region. The new recruits entering military camps began rigorous training to improve their combat effectiveness.

However, while the Romans were tirelessly preparing for war, the Senate had yet to appoint a commander to lead the campaign against the rebels. This was because the escalating conflict required commanding more legions, and governors were undoubtedly the best candidates for such leadership. But as November approached, the Romans had more pressing matters than suppressing the rebels—to conduct their annual consular elections.

The outgoing governor, Lucullus, had already made clear his desire to serve as governor in some Eastern province. The other governor, Longinus, was willing to lead the military campaign, yet prominent Senators such as Catullus opposed him. The official reason given was that "the newly recruited soldiers required further training before engaging in warfare, and by then, new consuls would be elected. To avoid complications, it would be better for the newly inaugurated consul to lead the expedition." In truth, most senators doubted Longinus due to his lack of war experience and lack of notable achievements, believing he was unlikely to successfully quell the rebellion.

Roman consular elections followed a complex procedure: senators wishing to run had to first file applications with the Senate, where the current consuls and Chief Elders performed an initial screening, quietly advising unlikely candidates to withdraw. Current governors also consulted Rome's religious calendar to select auspicious dates to convene the Citizens' Assembly for voting. During the period leading up to the assembly, candidates utilized various means to rally as many voters as possible.

On the eve of the election, the current governors submitted the candidate list to the temple, where the divination priests silently prayed over it before the gods. If auspicious omens were observed, the list was approved; if ill omens occurred, the candidate was disqualified from the election the following day. On election day, all candidates gave public speeches before a crowd of Roman citizens from all directions, and some even engaged in debates. The two candidates receiving the most votes became the new consuls...

This year's consular election hinged heavily on the topic of the Campanian uprising. The southern reaches of Campania were in chaos, with land trade routes nearly entirely severed, adversely affecting the lives of Roman citizens who were quite dissatisfied. The candidates were all aware of this and made similar promises: that if elected, they would promptly deploy forces to eliminate the rebels and restore peace and prosperity to Rome.

The consular elections lasted over a month, and in the end, Senator Cneius Cornelius Lentulus Crodianus and Lucius Gaius Publicola were elected as the new consuls for the year.

During this time, the rebel army in Campania underwent significant changes.

Shortly after capturing Pompeii, the rebels launched successive offensives, overcoming towns such as Lora, Abella, Suysula within just over a month. Their reputation spread far and wide, attracting a continuous stream of volunteers, swelling their ranks to fifty thousand.

The reckless ravaging by the rebel army inflicted tremendous suffering upon the Campanians, whose pleas for help poured into Rome like a flood. However, the rebels' formidable strength led the two newly appointed consuls to act cautiously. They unanimously called for further recruitment, delaying military action, intensifying training, and raising the soldiers' combat effectiveness to ensure the rebels' eventual defeat.

This time, the Senate did not rush the consuls into immediate action. The rebels' growing power was one reason, but more importantly, the capture and devastation of several towns in southern Campania had led to the slaughter of many local nobles. Even if order were restored, the region's power structure would inevitably face a reshuffling. For the Roman senators eyeing Campania's fertile lands, this presented a perfect opportunity to seize greater control of the region. Unspoken yet mutually understood, they agreed with the consuls' proposal to delay action, with some even silently hoping for more chaos in Campania.

But the Roman senators were unaware that the rebel army no longer intended to remain in southern Campania and was preparing to march further south.

Although Spartacus had proposed this plan during the capture of Pompeii, taking action in less than two months was driven by rapidly shifting circumstances.

The rebels' consecutive triumphs over Campanian towns and their growing renown not only attracted impoverished Samnite shepherds led by Atmidonos but also displaced farmers from southern Italy's Apulia region, led by Tormas. These new recruits informed the Military Commander Conference that countless impoverished compatriots in their homeland shared their plight and yearned to join the rebellion against Rome. However, their fears of reprisals from city-state nobles and the distance prevented them from coming forward, urging the rebel army to march southward to liberate them.

Although ostensibly thriving in southern Campania, the rebel army faced significant challenges.

Firstly, the rapid increase in troop numbers exacerbated resource consumption, especially as the forces of Enomai and Attutmus, lacking foresight, had nearly run out of food supplies, forcing them to rely on aid from other units. Now, apart from several difficult-to-conquer towns, southern Campania was virtually pillaged, leaving little opportunity to obtain more supplies in a short time.