

# Rome Must Perish

## Chapter 26: Chapter 25 Initiation of War

The kitchen was filled with tension. Maximus stayed there only briefly before having to step outside to avoid being in the way.

In that moment, he suddenly felt somewhat lost: He had come to this era, wanting to change the doomed fate of Spartacus' rebellion army. Yet when it was time to fight the Roman Army, he could only observe and wait for the outcome of the battle, completely powerless.

If only I could command an army to join the fight! ... This thought suddenly emerged in Maximus' mind.

As Maximus was mulling over his thoughts, several figures flashed before his eyes. He immediately snapped back to reality and shouted, "Akegu, Casius, what are you doing?!"

"Te... Teacher, we were thinking of going to the kitchen to help," Akegu stammered in response.

The title "Teacher" was something Maximus had instructed them to use. Considering the effort he had devoted to teaching the children, he certainly lived up to that title.

"Didn't I tell you before? During this crucial time, you must not wander around! You need to stay with Uncle Vorenus at all times so that I can find you quickly in case anything happens. Do you understand?" Maximus said sternly.

"We just wanted to help a little..." Casius quietly explained, but immediately bowed his head when Maximus glared at him.

"Teacher, we were wrong. We'll go back right now, please don't be angry!" Naisuya quickly admitted her mistake, and the other children chimed in quickly as well.

Only then did Maximus' expression soften, and he nodded: "Since this is your first offense, I'll forgive you this time."

The children respected Maximus deeply and didn't want to make him angry, so they obediently turned and went back to the main building.

Maximus followed them to the front yard, where he ran into Pigeris.

"Captain, do we need to load everything onto the carts like we did yesterday?" Pigeris asked urgently the moment he saw Maximus.

"Of course." Maximus answered without hesitation. Seeing Pigeris' lingering confusion, he added firmly, "We must prepare for the worst and hope for the best."

Pigeris felt somewhat reassured by these words and led his team to move the supplies.

Maximus then ascended to the rooftop of the main building. A moment later, he watched as the people from the kitchen pushed wooden carts loaded with steaming hot food out of the farmhouse gates. At this time, soldiers would usually rush over to snatch up the food, crowding the entrance completely. But today, they were absent, and the food carts made their way smoothly to the camp.

On the surface, this seemed like a good thing, but Maximus felt uneasy. He had hoped that today would unfold as usual, which would indicate that the soldiers were not affected by the arrival of the Roman Army yesterday. However, recalling that even he hadn't given his usual evening lecture to the supply team last night, it was clear that everyone shared the same nervousness and anxiety when it came to real warfare.

Realizing this, Maximus forced himself to remain calm, as his behavior as the supply team's captain would influence the morale of his subordinates.

After breakfast, Maximus instructed Seksepi to drive the cattle and sheep to the back hill of the farmhouse. Then, he ordered the rest of the supply team to gather inside the farmhouse.

By now, daylight had fully broken, and the sun hung diagonally in a clear sky.

"Woo! Woo! Woo!..." The urgent sound of copper horns echoed throughout the camp.

The Romans are here?!... Maximus hurried up to the rooftop again, looking out toward the horizon.

In the distance, the fully armed Roman soldiers were orderly marching out of the camp they had built yesterday, directly forming ranks in the fields...

After about half an hour, the Roman Army had formed their traditional three-line formation. Behind this formation was a tighter array of auxiliary soldiers, who were followed by ten carts, while each wing was flanked by 50 cavalymen.

The copper horn sounded long and loud.

The Roman Army started advancing slowly toward the rebel camp.

It seems the Romans are really going to attack this time!... Maximus felt a surge of tension as he shifted his gaze to the nearby scene.

While the Roman soldiers were forming ranks, the rebel army also began to take action. In fact, after breakfast, the rebel soldiers had already been standing by in the camp. Having gone through yesterday's experience, although the formation was still noisy and chaotic, they were quicker to assemble this time. By the time the Roman Army reached the base of the hill, the rebels had completed their formation... This brought Maximus a brief moment of relief.

Soon, he saw Spartacus standing at the front of the formation's centerline. Spartacus shouted something loudly, and the gladiators in the front ranks swung their spears and swords, roaring in unison. The new recruits were inspired by this and began shouting one after another, until the entire rebel army's formation was filled with a deafening roar...

Though many of the slaves who joined the rebellion were still clad in single-layer clothing and held tools like hoes, pitchforks, and wooden sticks in their hands, their hatred for the Romans had been awakened. Now, as they faced the well-equipped Roman Army at the hill's base, there was no trembling or fear but rather rage burning in their eyes.

Even Maximus, positioned at the rear, could feel the shift in morale, and a sliver of hope for victory stirred in his heart.

At this moment, the Roman Army halted their advance. They began to adjust the slightly disordered ranks at the base of the hill, while soldiers jumped out of each cart, carrying wooden structures which they moved through the gaps in the formation to set up in front of the ranks. Then, they busily worked around these wooden frames.

"What are those things they're setting up in front of the ranks?!"

"Why haven't those Roman dogs attacked yet?!"

...

The soldiers behind Spartacus murmured among themselves.

"Those are Roman crossbows!" Spartacus loudly explained to the soldiers, quelling their paranoia, "They're like the slingshots children play with, capable of shooting stones. But in terms of accuracy, it's not great. It's difficult to hit anything..."

No matter his expression or tone, Spartacus appeared quite relaxed, but inwardly, he grew anxious: How could I forget that the Romans use this tactic in pitched battle!

"Report to the Legion Commander, all crossbows are installed and standing by for your orders!" Vidnius saluted Grabo and reported.

"I see." Grabo glanced at the seasoned camp commander before him, a veteran he had appointed against opposition. This old soldier had once served as a centurion under Sula and achieved impressive results in the wars of Little Asia. Ever since Vidnius assumed his post, he had organized every aspect of the military—marching, training, encampment, and discipline—flawlessly, earning Grabo's trust.

"Proceed with the plan. Let those insolent slaves taste the terror of war!" Grabo sneered, pointing contemptuously at the rebel forces on the hill.

Upon receiving orders, the Roman crossbow gunners began cranking the handles, pulling back the double-layered spring arms until they were locked by metal hooks. Then, a lead ball was placed on the sliding rail.

This was a small lead ball, weighing only half a talent (a standard crossbow lead ball weighs about one talent, roughly 26 kilograms). This reduced weight allowed it to travel farther. Unlike regular lead balls, this one was wrapped in oiled cloth. Once ignited, the crossbow gunners quickly pulled the trigger. A "whoosh! whoosh!" sound sliced through the air as ten flaming projectiles shot forth, flying toward the hillside and landing over the rebel ranks.

The rebel soldiers largely breathed a sigh of relief, but Spartacus was suddenly alarmed. He hadn't anticipated that the crossbows would fire not lead balls but firebombs, and their landing zone was none other than the rebel camp not far from the formation.

The rebel camp had never been systematically planned, with tents clustered closely together. No fire precautions had been taken, and as it was early summer, the weather was dry, and materials were flammable. The fire bombs ignited the tents as soon as they landed...

Maximus saw five or six spots of flame erupt around the farmhouse and froze for a moment before realizing the danger. He hurriedly rushed downstairs and shouted to Acronis, Pigeris, and the others in the front yard: "Quick! Gather people to extinguish the fires in the camp! Go put them out!"

Leading the personnel from the supply team, Maximus dashed toward the camp, completely forgetting to inform Spartacus.

## **Chapter 27: Chapter 26 Engaging in Battle**

The rebel soldiers saw the camp behind them catch fire and began to panic. Even Hamilcar felt nervous and asked Spartacus urgently, "The Romans are very cunning,

trying to burn our camp and undermine our morale. If this continues, I'm worried... Should we change our plans and launch a preemptive attack?!"

"Don't panic, we stick to the original plan and continue to wait," Spartacus said calmly and gravely, "Send someone to inform Maximus immediately, telling him to take the supply team and be responsible for putting out the fire."

"Alright!" Hamilcar felt a bit more settled inside. Although he had experienced some battles, he found it hard to stay as composed as Spartacus during critical moments, which is the main reason he willingly assisted Spartacus.

"Keep firing, don't stop!" Grabo ordered loudly, looking up at the firelight on the hillside ahead. Although he was permitted to bring only half a legion, his cautious nature led him to insist on having more crossbow cannons and cavalry. Initially intended to intimidate the enemies of slave origin during battle, he formulated this battle plan after the cavalry scouted the enemy camp's layout, and it turned out to be effective.

Fire bombs flew overhead from time to time, while the constant shouts from the supply team came from behind. The rebel soldiers kept turning their heads back to look, feeling like they were on a roller coaster, with their initially high morale now gone. The formation, which was originally quite dense, gradually loosened, and the clamor grew louder.

Spartacus remained standing still, intently overlooking the Roman crossbow gun position down the hill. Suddenly, he spoke, "That crossbow cannon hasn't fired a fireball for two rounds!... Oh, the one next to it seems to have stopped as well!"

Hamilcar looked attentively and found it true, immediately rejoicing, "Looks like it's broken!"

"With the crossbow cannon being roasted by fire, it's no wonder it's broken!" Spartacus unfolded his brows and shouted back, "Brothers, hold on a little longer! The Romans' crossbow cannons will soon all break down, and then they will have to come up the hill to fight us!"

He shouted, Hamilcar followed suit, and the nearby gladiators joined in as well. The soldiers in the center gradually regained their composure. But then, suddenly, a roar erupted from the left flank, where the rebel soldiers charged down towards the Roman Army, like a roaring mountain flood.

Hamilcar was taken aback upon seeing this.

Spartacus shouted angrily, "What's happening?! What is Enomai doing?!"

Just as he finished speaking, another roar erupted from the right wing, and then the soldiers on that side also charged down the hill.

"Damn Cross—" Spartacus's curse was cut short. He raised the short sword in his hand and shouted with all his might, "Brothers, avenge against the Romans, charge with me!" After speaking, he took the sword and shield and was the first to charge down the hill. With such a situation, Spartacus certainly couldn't stand by and watch the left and right wings fight the Roman Army alone.

The soldiers shouted "Revenge!!! Revenge!!!..." and rushed down eagerly.

The phalanx led by Antonix also followed closely from the center route.

The rebel army successively charged downhill, catching Maximus's attention. The sudden change in battle plans of the rebel army made him uneasy.

He looked around: people from the supply team were scattered throughout the camp fighting the fire...

He hesitated briefly and made a decision, "Everyone, hurry and gather! Quickly!"

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Grabo felt inevitably nervous seeing the imposing charge of the rebel army from the hill.

However, Vidnius, the camp commander, remained calm, directing the legion's officers to shout loudly. They swiftly combined the three-line centurion's small square formations into a large phalanx about 300 meters long and 10 columns deep. Behind the phalanx were about 1,000 auxiliary soldiers (with another 300 auxiliary soldiers stationed to defend the camp). Grabo did not send these auxiliary soldiers to the front to hinder the rebel army's charge initially because he lacked confidence in the hastily conscripted City Guards from Napolet and surrounding towns, fearing these poorly performing Campagnians would become a burden instead of being helpful in a direct confrontation.

When the Roman Legion completed their formation merger, the rebel army's left and right wings had nearly reached the front line.

"Javelins!... Javelins!..." The Roman officers' loud shouts urged the soldiers to quickly assume a throwing stance, and following the officers, they launched their heavy spears towards the enemy. Though the time was short and their actions not standard, the concentrated volley of thousands of heavy spears inflicted disaster upon the inexperienced and poorly protected rebel soldiers.

Amid screams, countless rebel soldiers were pierced by heavy spears, collapsing abruptly. The once compact formation instantly became sparse; some fortunate rebel soldiers managed to escape the javelin attack, turning to flee in fear. Some continued moving forward, though their speed visibly slowed, with only the gladiators at the forefront maintaining their charge momentum.

If it were a mature Roman legion, seeing such significant results from the javelin attack, they would inevitably seize the opportunity to charge, completely disrupting the enemy's formation. However, the Roman Army had no such intention this time. Instead, under the officers' leadership, they raised the shield wall and drew their short swords in a defensive posture. Despite dealing a heavy blow to the enemy, they couldn't help but feel nervous facing the fiercely attacking gladiators.

The gladiators did not flinch from the heavy spear attack and the reduction in comrades; instead, the dire battlefield situation ignited their bloodlust. They roared loudly, with faces twisted like fierce beasts. Battle and death were their destiny, just like in the arena.

Enomai and Cross were the kings of these beasts, charging at the forefront. They wielded the large square shield with heavy spears embedded in it as if easily handling a rag, using momentum to forcefully press against the Roman soldiers holding shields defensively. The immense power shook the opponents, and then the short sword in their right hand swiftly pierced through the gaps in the shields, injuring the opponents...

Following that, the central army of the rebel forces, led by Spartacus and Antonix, also reached the Roman formation, inflicting similar damage on the frontline Roman soldiers.

The Roman Formation experienced some disorder, making Grabo, who was in the rear, a bit anxious. He couldn't help but shout, "Quickly send the Campagnian soldiers—"

"No rush, Legion Commander," Vidnius loudly reassured, "Rest assured, our soldiers can hold on!"

"Is... is that so?" Vidnius's words slightly settled Grabo's emotions. He watched attentively from horseback: amid the officers' shouts, some panicked soldiers instinctively followed the orders, closing ranks more tightly, with some soldiers at the front line abandoning their short swords to hold their shields with both hands for all-out defense... This caused the entire formation to contract inward, becoming more dense.

The gladiators' advance was halted, as they were too few in number. Once caught in a pitched battle, their lack of overall coordination significantly diminished their attack power. The Roman soldiers began to recover...

Not until this point did Grabo finally let out a sigh of relief and asked in an inquiring tone, "When can we let the Campagnians go up?"

"Wait a little longer, let them exhaust the slaves' strength. Then they won't have the energy to run away," Vidnius replied.

"Let's do it that way," Grabo agreed.



Spartacus repeatedly gathered all his strength to crash into the Roman soldiers before him, but the opponents guarded their bodies with square shields, focusing solely on defense without counterattacking. This left Spartacus struggling to find an opening to wound his foes. With the rebel formation being relatively loose and the opponent forced to retreat, he gradually became embedded in the enemy ranks with enemies on both his left and right sides. This made him cautious and restrained from attacking with full force, growing anxious: These damned Romans are like turtles, making it hard to quickly break through their formation. What now?! The brothers on the flanks suffered losses from the javelin attack and are weakened; how long can they hold on?!...

## **Chapter 28: Chapter 27 Defeat**

Seeing the rebel soldiers all rushing down the mountain, Maximus stopped extinguishing the fire and focused intently on the battle downhill: the javelin attack from the Romans filled him with anxiety, the charge of the gladiators excited him, and the deadlock between the two sides made him tense... Then he saw the Roman formation at the back split in two, beginning a flanking maneuver towards the rebel wings, causing the new recruits, armed with farming tools and never having fought before, to collapse at the sight of the enemy attacking from behind...

It's over! ...Although Maximus had anticipated this from his past life's memory, witnessing the scene of rebel soldiers crying and fleeing up the mountain made his scalp tingle, and his hands and feet turn cold. It took him a while to regain his senses, and he urgently shouted, "Acronis! Gaius! Take your people and quickly run to the back of the mountain!..."

"Pigeris! Have your transport team hurry and harness the horses, follow them to the back of the mountain!..."

"Vorenius! Kids! Follow me!..." Maximus shouted loudly as he ran back.

Acronis, Pigeris, and Gaius's responses were heard in the camp, but were accompanied by panicked screams from the other members of the supply team, with some running directly towards Maximus.

Time was pressing, and Maximus couldn't look carefully, so he led them in a hurried retreat towards the back mountain...

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Seeing the enemy collapse across the line, Grabo was overjoyed and immediately ordered, "Send the cavalry out, chase the enemy for me!"

"Yes!"



"Legion soldiers—" Grabo hesitated and said, "Keep the formation and press towards the enemy camp at a normal pace. Leave the task of pursuing the routing soldiers to the cavalry and auxiliary soldiers."

Grabo was cautious because he didn't trust the combat abilities of these new Roman recruits. The gladiators' charge had him on edge, worrying that if they dispersed Roman soldiers in pursuit of routing rebels who retaliated when cornered, things could go awry...

Vidnius had no objection to this.

The Roman cavalry and Campania auxiliary soldiers pursued from both wings, forcing the fugitives to flee up the mountain.

Because the supply team gave up extinguishing the fire, several outbreaks in the camp rekindled, causing the fugitives to panic even more, so when many saw the supply team's hundred people gathered and traversing the back mountain, they blindly fled towards it.

More and more people followed, making the back mountain the primary escape route for fugitives, naturally including the gladiators. Since they were at the front row during the charge start, they ended up at the rearguard while retreating. However, they were not frightened slaves; when the pursuers closed in, they dared to turn back and counterattack. The Roman cavalry and auxiliary soldiers, having suffered several setbacks, dared not fight them and simply bypassed them to pursue other fugitives.

By the time the gladiators passed the Putaojiao Farm and reached the rear mountain, the front fugitives were already scattered, and the Roman cavalry and auxiliary soldiers vaguely surrounded the gladiators.

At this point, during their escape, the gladiators regrouped, and although they were tense at the forming encirclement, they weren't panicked. Most had experience being surrounded during team competitions in the arena; thus, under the loud shouts of Spartacus and Cross, they quickly formed a circle of over a hundred, slowly advancing up the back mountain.

The weak Roman cavalry and Campania auxiliary soldiers couldn't stop them and had to cease blocking, trailing from three sides instead.

Initially flat, the slope of the Portuguese Manor's rear mountain became steeper the higher they climbed. The width also narrowed so that when the gladiators reached a certain height, the slope could no longer accommodate their people in a circular formation.

Spartacus immediately ordered the formation to switch into four columns and continue retreating upwards.

The trailing Campania auxiliary soldiers faced the ever-wary gladiators, dared not attack, and rapidly withdrew when a horn sounded from behind them.

It turned out that Grabo, following the Roman formation, arrived at the rebel camp. Observing the auxiliary soldiers confronting the gladiators on the rear mountain and to avoid losses, he ordered them to withdraw.

At the same time, he summoned a guide who had served as a guard for the wine farm but had escaped the turmoil due to shopping orders in Napolet that day.

"Is there another way down this rear mountain apart from this path?" Grabo asked, looking up at the rear mountain.

"Sir," the guard respectfully replied, "aside from this side's gentle slope that barely reaches the peak, the rest is extraordinarily steep, impossible to climb. Furthermore, the mountain path becomes narrower as you ascend, with just a small platform able to accommodate several hundred people near the mountaintop, where our steward once developed a small vineyard..."

Listening to this, Grabo suddenly asked, "Is there a water source on this rear mountain?"

"No water source," the guide understood Grabo's implication and shook his head, saying, "We built a reservoir in the mountain vineyard, but it's small and couldn't even supply enough water for so many people for one day..."

Grabo felt a sense of relief but wasn't entirely reassured. He pointed at the rear mountain and ordered Vidnius, "Immediately recall the Campania auxiliary soldiers, have them construct a new camp at the mountain side, seal off all paths down to trap the enemies. The legionaries are to keep watch. Send cavalry circling the mountain to survey the terrain for any possible descent routes."

"Not chasing the other fugitives?" Vidnius asked somewhat unwillingly.

"I saw with clarity earlier, those damned gladiators mostly escaped up the mountain. Once they're eliminated, the remaining runaway slaves mean little," Grabo responded with scorn.

"What about the slaves who surrendered?"

"Kill them all, no need to waste manpower guarding them," Grabo sighed, "It's a pity, this is just a minor slave uprising, no possibility of parading them victoriously down the Roman Road!"

Vidnius, who had once participated in a triumph with Sula, wasn't bothered by this regret and promptly said, "Legion Commander, I'll carry out the orders!"

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Even after the enemy withdrew, Spartacus remained vigilant. He and Hamilcar, with twenty-some gladiators, stayed behind to defend a narrow pass on the mountain road.

After a short while, he saw Roman soldiers lined at the mountain base. When those auxiliary soldiers once again threw away their shields and armor to pick up shovels and digging tools, his heart skipped a beat.

"Not good, the Romans intend to trap us on the mountain to death!" Hamilcar voiced his concern.

The nearby gladiators' expressions changed, all looking towards Spartacus.

Spartacus, with a grim face, withdrew his gaze from the mountain base, telling everyone, "Let's go, return to the mountaintop. No need to guard here."

"What if the Romans attempt to storm the mountain?" a gladiator worriedly asked.

"Right now, I wish they would attempt to storm it," Spartacus replied before heading up the mountain.

Hamilcar understood his meaning, but others were bewildered yet followed along.

The mountain road twisted upwards, and as Spartacus walked, he suddenly stopped, seeing a row of carts without their pack animals parked against the cliff.

Spartacus approached to inspect them one by one, finding sacks of flour, smoked meat, sealed wine jars, and plenty of dry bread inside the wagons...

Feeling slightly relieved, Spartacus echoed back to Hamilcar, "This Maximus was well-prepared, but why abandon all of it here? If the Romans storm the mountain, these goods would fall into their hands!"

## **Chapter 29: Chapter 28 Maximus's Suggestion**

"It must be that the path ahead is too narrow for the carriages," Hamilcar thought for a moment and explained, "Besides, the people in the Supply Team are just old folks, women, and children; they also can't guard these carriages. Bringing them up the mountain was already a great effort."

"Indeed, it's remarkable that Maximus managed to organize the Supply Team to safely bring these supplies up the mountain while we were suffering a defeat and being chased by the Roman Army. You did the right thing by having him take over the Supply Team!"

Spartacus praised Maximus, then turned to look at the other gladiators, "Volcres, you stay here with the brothers and guard our food."

Volcres, a Thrace gladiator, had always been loyal to Spartacus, and immediately followed the order.

Other gladiators stayed behind as Spartacus and Hamilcar continued upwards, soon seeing more than a dozen people coming down from above.

Spartacus instantly recognized the leader as the gladiator Fesaros, who had injured his leg while escaping from Gladiator School but recovered after twenty days and served as a centurion under Antonix. Upon seeing Spartacus, his tired eyes lit up, and he respectfully called, "Leader Spartacus!"

Behind him were new slave recruits, their heads low, looking dejected, not even bothering to look up at Spartacus.

Spartacus noticed and asked, "Where are you going?"

"Maximus begged everyone to send people to guard the grain in the carriages below, but no one was willing, except me," Fesaros said helplessly, "because I'm on good terms with Maximus and couldn't refuse."

It seems it's not that Maximus hadn't thought it through... Spartacus instinctively glanced at Hamilcar, then said, "You don't need to take anyone down. I've already had Volcres guard there."

On hearing this, Fesaros was invigorated and turned to the others, "Brothers, we don't have to go down, let's quickly head up and rest."

The others turned back in relief, too lazy to even respond.

Spartacus' brows knitted even tighter.

As they passed a turn in the mountain path, Fesaros loudly said from the front, "Leader, the road ahead is steep, be careful, we were too frantic coming up before... some brothers fell..."

After the rebel army stationed at the wine farm, Spartacus personally scouted the surrounding terrain. Having walked the mountain, he didn't find it particularly difficult. But Fesaros' words left him stunned, quickly turning to anguish, as he silently followed Fesaros and the others through the steepest part of the mountain road, arriving at the rebel stragglers' resting place.

This was a flat area at the mountain's peak, surrounded by rough, uneven rocks, with a thick layer of black-brown soil in the center. Along with sufficient sunlight, no wonder it had been turned into a vineyard.

However, now the shelters that blocked the mountain wind were removed, and the grape trellises were all gone, without lush green leaves or heavy grape clusters, only a dense crowd of rebel soldiers. They huddled on the ground, some leaning against each other, asleep from exhaustion, others clutching their wounds, groaning incessantly, some looking dejected, sobbing quietly... each dispirited, morale low. When Spartacus entered, more than half remained as immobile as wooden sculptures, as if the rebel leader did not exist.

Only Cross, Enomai, and Antonix, who sat at the edge, stood. From deep inside the dense crowd, Maximus saw this and squeezed over.

"How many do we still have?" Spartacus first asked the question he was most concerned about.

"Just now, Maximus roughly counted for me, there are about 1,400 people here, including 170 from the Supply Team," even the always spirited Cross seemed somewhat despondent, "Among them, more than 200 are wounded, unable to fight anytime soon..."

Spartacus felt a pang of sorrow: before the battle, the rebel army had over 4,000 people. After one fight, three-quarters were gone. Those not on the mountain were either killed, captured, or fled elsewhere...

Shaking his head, Spartacus momentarily set aside his grief and asked sternly, "What about the gladiators' casualties?"

"Including those you've left midway down, here we have 163 people left..." Cross, the gritty Gaul, was now also showing sadness, "Boudovell, Nigel, Vibelte... they all died fighting the Romans... I saw it with my own eyes..."

The names Cross mentioned were all Gaul gladiators closely connected to him.

Spartacus vigorously patted his shoulder for comfort.

"Spartacus, the Romans are building a camp at the mountain's base, trying to trap us here. What do we do now?!" Antonix interjected anxiously, as they could see the situation below from the mountain top.

"Why not, while the Romans haven't finished digging trenches, we rush down and launch a surprise attack, we could break through their encirclement!" Enomai shouted loudly.

"We might have some food on the mountain, but not enough water. If we're surrounded three or four days by the Romans, we'll die of thirst. Better to fight them head-on, as Enomai suggested, once everyone's rested!" Cross said through gritted teeth.

Even though Antonix stayed silent, his expression clearly agreed.

It seemed the three had already reached a consensus... Spartacus hesitated: the Roman camp building below isn't without defenses, their regular troops are on alert. Over 4,000 couldn't break through the enemy before, and now bringing down these demoralized stragglers seems a desperate gamble! But if not, staying trapped by the Romans is just waiting for death...

In a dilemma, Spartacus was about to say, "Let me think some more—" but then Maximus, who had arrived, said, "The Romans can't completely block us; we can quietly descend the mountain."

"Quietly descend? How?!" Cross was instantly furious, yelling, "This mountain, except for this side, is surrounded by cliffs, no place to set foot. Your idea of sneaking down is a dream! If you hadn't led the Supply Team up this mountain, causing soldiers to follow, we wouldn't be trapped here!"

"Cross, if it weren't for Maximus leading the frightened soldiers up, we might still be fleeing, not discussing how to break through here," Hamilcar defended Maximus immediately.

"At least that way we might escape, not just wait for death as we are now!" Cross retorted.

"Enough of this arguing!" Spartacus shouted irritably, then turned to Maximus with a voice of hope and tension, "What did you mean by 'quietly descend'? Is there another way down?"

"Of course!" Maximus, confident, looked at everyone, finally fixating on Cross, and said solemnly, "You were right, apart from this side, the rest of the mountain is cliff, too high off the ground, descending isn't easy, but it's not impossible! I brought several bundles of sturdy rope; although not quite long enough on their own, there's grapevines everywhere here, some are very strong. By tying them with the ropes, we can let them down to the ground, and also—"

Maximus pointed to the eastern cliff, speaking emphatically, "I checked the terrain here before: there are two beams reaching the ground over there, with some ledges between them where we can brace ourselves. We can use the ropes, slide down while stepping on the mountain to slow down, possibly reaching the ground safely, and since it's on the side separated by another mountain from the Romans' camp, they'll hardly notice our movements."

Maximus' words left Spartacus both skeptical and renewed with hope. He turned to the leaders and said loudly, "Let's go, let's all take a look!"

### **Chapter 30: Chapter 29 Commander**

Under the leadership of Maximus, a group of people, feeling anxious and uncertain, pushed through the crowd. First, they carefully examined the cliff on the east, then checked the ropes Maximus had brought up the mountain with a cart, and finally personally tested the grapevines the women of the Supply Team were twisting...

The worries on several leaders' faces finally vanished, regaining their confidence.

Spartacus directly gave Maximus a powerful hug: "Maximus, thank you! You saved us all!"

Hamilcar stepped forward and punched Maximus in the chest: "Well done, lad!"

Antonix smiled at him.

Enomai scratched his head in embarrassment.

Cross coughed heavily twice: "The plan Maximus came up with is indeed good, but whether it can actually be carried out needs to be tried first. Even if it can be implemented, not everyone has the guts and ability to climb down from this mountain; the injured brothers can't, and the people from the Supply Team definitely can't!"

The leaders were taken aback by his words, their expressions turning grave again.

Maximus couldn't help but want to speak, but Spartacus said solemnly: "Don't worry about them; we can use this method to secretly climb down and surprise attack the Romans! The Romans must have studied the geography beforehand, which is why they built the camp downhill, thinking they could trap us on the mountain, so they would lack vigilance -"

Cross's eyes lit up, excitedly interjecting: "Spartacus is right, let's do it this way! Let the brothers rest for a day, and after they recover, we'll sneak down the mountain tomorrow night, the Romans will surely be asleep, and then we'll launch a surprise attack and surely defeat them!"

"Not tomorrow night, but we must go down the mountain tonight to launch the surprise attack!" Spartacus said with emphasis.

"Attack tonight?! Isn't that too hasty?!" Hamilcar felt surprised.

"The Romans just fought a battle with us, but they haven't rested, the auxiliary soldiers are building the camp, the Legion Soldiers are on alert, the Cavalry are patrolling



everywhere..." Spartacus pointed downhill, analyzing seriously: "Look! Their manpower is concentrated on this side, probably planning to dig trenches, build walls, and bury traps by nightfall to completely block our way down the mountain, so they won't have enough time and manpower to build fortifications in other directions of the camp, and since they've fought all day they will definitely sleep deeply at night, slackening patrol and vigilance, so we can more easily infiltrate their camp.

But if we wait until tomorrow night... this Roman Army stayed only one night at an olive oil farm yesterday and built a camp, which shows their Commander's caution, he will certainly have his Soldiers reinforce the entire camp's defenses tomorrow, making it harder for us to stage a surprise attack by then..."

Everyone was convinced by his words, but Antonix reminded: "Spartacus, your decision is undoubtedly correct, but most brothers have lost the will to fight after the defeat, fearing to follow us in taking such a huge risk in climbing down the mountain and surprising the Romans."

"Leave it to me." Spartacus replied without hesitation, then strode towards the center of the island.

"Brothers, we failed in this battle with the Romans because of my mistake!" Spartacus began with shocking words, causing many Soldiers to look up in confusion.

"I was afraid of the Romans, so I always thought of gaining more advantage before the battle in order to win ultimately. Therefore, I waited for the Romans to attack first, instead of leading you to launch an offensive actively, but I clearly forgot that the Romans possess astonishing wealth and superior equipment, the longer we wait, the more advantage the Romans gather, and the less likely we can defeat them!"

Spartacus's voice was loud and sincere, captivating almost everyone's attention on the island.

"So, is there anything about us poor people that surpasses the Roman Army?!" Spartacus loudly questioned, then his voice dropped: "I once lived in a Thrace tribe near the Yoke Star Sea, with a wife, children, and a peaceful life... But the Romans came, conscripting people from our tribe as auxiliary soldiers, and I was forced to go to Little Asia with the Roman Army..."

Little did I know, another Roman Army arrived near my hometown shortly after, and when forcibly collecting food from Thrace tribes, two Roman Soldiers attempted to assault... women from my tribe, angering our people, the Romans were enraged and killed all the tribesmen in our village, burned the entire village to frighten other Thrace tribes, and thus my wife and child perished..." Spartacus's voice trembled, his eyes wet with tears.

Everyone listened intently, their expressions grave.

"Though other Thrace tribesmen rushed to Little Asia to secretly tell us still fighting for the Romans this shocking news, we couldn't escape the Romans' pursuit, ultimately becoming their slaves, forced to fight in the arena to entertain those despicable Romans...

Brothers, you should be like me, once living a life of freedom, yet for various reasons becoming Roman slaves, enduring their whips day and night, working tirelessly like cows and sheep for them!

You joined our ranks because you refuse to be slaves any longer; you wish to live freely again. For this, you don't fear facing the mighty Roman Army because you've endured hellish suffering, you don't fear death!"

Spartacus's voice rose passionately: "The Romans are strong, but their greater wealth only makes them fear death more, and that's where we surpass them because only those unafraid of death are true warriors who can create great miracles!

The previous battle was our loss, but it made the Romans look down on us even more. They build camps downhill, thinking we'll meekly starve on the mountain like obedient cattle, but they'll never expect that tonight, we'll descend the cliff like nimble monkeys, and assault the unsuspecting Roman camp like fierce eagles, defeating them completely! My brothers, will you follow me in this surprise attack?!"

The Soldiers were invigorated by his words but also felt puzzled, someone shouted: "Leader Spartacus, except for the Romans guarding downhill, the rest of the mountain is sheer cliffs, how can we possibly climb down!"

"Archidas, I recall you were a slave herding cattle for the Romans at a nearby farm, familiar with the terrain here. It's true except for this side, there are no other paths down the mountain. But-" Spartacus took a deep breath, shouting passionately: "As long as we don't fear death, we can create miracles! I will be the first to climb down the mountain, and if you see me safely reach the ground, will you follow me?!"

Spartacus looked around, raising his voice: "Will you follow me?! With hatred in your hearts, follow me to assault the Roman Camp and pierce those high and mighty Romans to the ground, let them know we're no lowly cattle, but miracle-creating heroes, death gods who'll make them kneel in fear and beg for mercy! Will—you—follow—me?!"

"Yes! ... Yes!! ... Yes!!! ..." The Soldiers, stirred to fervor by his words, scrambled to shout, sweeping away the previously somber and gloomy atmosphere.

Impressive! ... Maximus watched Spartacus standing tall in the crowd, his eyes shining and his heart deeply shaken, he somewhat understood why Spartacus remains the rebel army's Commander in history, his Soldiers always following him to the death, never betraying.

Such a leader with charisma is so worth learning from! ... Maximus secretly marveled.