

Rome Must Perish

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Chapter 51: Chapter 50: Absorbing the Leader

"Enomai was right, these dock workers and sailors are good recruits. Moreover, Campania has several port towns, and there are far more workers and sailors than just these few hundred. If we don't let them join, other workers and sailors who want to join will hesitate as well..." Cross's eyes moved, and he said in a low voice, "We can agree to let them join first, and after they join, we can slowly figure out how to break them up and assign them to various battalions..."

"I think this approach is inappropriate." Hamilcar objected, "Since we've agreed, we should keep our promises. Otherwise, they will be dissatisfied, and if the soldiers aren't united, we'll face troubles when we fight."

"So you're saying you disagree with them joining?" Cross asked, discontentedly.

Hamilcar said grimly, "We can allow them to join and let them form their own team. I'm sure that Attutmus will be their captain. We can also allow him to attend our Military Commander Conference. This way, through the Military Commander Conference, Attutmus can carry out every resolution passed at the meeting, and we can thereby control them!"

Cross, Enomai, and Antonix were taken aback.

Cross, a bit agitated, said, "This person called Attutmus neither started a riot in the Gladiator School nor fought alongside us to defeat the Roman Army. What right does he have to attend our Military Commander Conference? If such a person can easily join our Military Commander Conference, what will the soldiers think!"

Cross's words made Enomai and Antonix nod in agreement.

"Maximus, do you have any suggestions?" Spartacus asked timely, drawing everyone's attention to the silent Maximus.

Maximus cleared his throat and said loudly, "If we only want to be a band of mountain bandits who occasionally plunder or harass the Romans, it doesn't matter if we don't accept this group of sailors from Napolet. But now we aim to oppose the strongest Roman people in the Mediterranean. Only by uniting everyone we can unite, strengthening our forces, can we hope to defeat the Romans and gain our freedom. Otherwise, we can only end in defeat and death—"

"We're not afraid of death." Cross interrupted coldly.

"We're not afraid of death, but since there's a chance of victory, why not strive for it?" Maximus retorted without backing down.

"I think we should indeed try." Spartacus chimed in timely, speaking solemnly, "Think about it. Ever since we defeated the Roman Army, more and more people have been joining us. Today, someone like Attutmus came, leading his team wanting to join us. As long as we continue to defeat the Roman Army, not only will this situation continue, but it will also increase, with the numbers becoming more sizable. What should we do then?

Are we to refuse them for fear of disorder? Italy is so vast, with so many people, many capable and who hate Rome. If they bring people over, we shouldn't reject them but should actively incorporate them. This not only rapidly expands our forces but also, when our numbers exceed ten thousand, reaching twenty, thirty, forty, or even fifty thousand, could we manage with just a few of us?!"

"Fifty thousand! That's impossible, is it?!" Enomai exclaimed in disbelief.

"Why impossible?" Hamilcar reminded, "It's only been a few days since we defeated the Roman Army, and we already have over three thousand people. Including this batch of sailors and workers, our numbers match what we had before the fight. At this rate, our forces will surpass ten thousand within a month."

Seizing the opportunity, Spartacus said, "The more people we have, if not well managed, chaos might ensue without the Romans attacking, causing us to disband. Therefore, we need to absorb those capable, allowing them to participate in our meetings, and manage the people they bring according to our collective will. Only then, when our ranks grow larger, will our fighting strength increase, enabling us to defeat the Romans together!"

Cross, Enomai, and Antonix appeared thoughtful.

Spartacus continued, "Of course, your concerns aren't without reason. Let's see if we can have it this way: Attutmus can become a Great Captain, leading his people, and join our Military Commander Conference, but he'll only have advisory rights, not voting rights initially, just like Maximus before. Once he proves his capabilities, we'll then discuss granting him voting rights. Besides, these dock workers and sailors probably lack combat experience, so we can assign some of our people to act as their team officers, quickly enhancing their combat abilities."

Listening to this, Maximus couldn't help but look at Spartacus a few more times: the rebel leader wasn't just someone who had the overall picture in mind and united comrades; he also skillfully used some means to achieve his goals...

As Maximus was lost in thoughts, he noticed Spartacus suddenly looking at him. Thinking that Spartacus discovered his thoughts, he saw Spartacus apologetically say, "Maximus, since you took on the role of Supply Camp Captain, the Supply Camp has become more vital to our entire force. The brothers all acknowledge your capabilities. I originally planned to propose granting you voting rights like ours at a meeting soon. I don't think anyone would oppose it. But now, if Attutmus joins and sees you're in a similar situation, he'll likely accept it more easily. So, I ask that you endure a little longer."

Maximus deliberately stayed silent for a while before unwillingly asking, "How much longer do I have to endure?"

"Once Attutmus understands the importance of the Supply Camp to our force, we'll discuss your issue. I believe it won't take long."

"Alright, then I'll... wait a bit more."

Spartacus looked around at the other four and said, "Let's vote. Do we agree to Attutmus's request to allow him to join and participate in our Military Commander Conference, with advisory rights?"

"I agree." Hamilcar promptly stated, as he was the one who proposed the suggestion, and naturally, he supported it.

Surprisingly, the second to agree wasn't Antonix but Cross. He quickly agreed, in part because Spartacus had valid points, and also because the Second Battalion recently suffered disgrace over a Medical Team issue, so he'd rather have Attutmus join than see Maximus already have the same rights as him.

Ultimately, Hamilcar's suggestion was easily passed.

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Attutmus joined the rebel army with his team, becoming a Great Captain and forming the Fifth Battalion.

This move by the rebel army triggered a chain reaction. In the next two days, dock workers and sailors continuously joined, increasing the rebel army's strength to over five thousand. The leaders then decided to send three battalions to Capua to rescue more Gladiators.

The First, Second, and Third Battalions, under the leadership of Spartacus, Cross, and Enomai, marched quickly along Ania Avenue northward early in the morning, reaching Capua in just one day.

Initially, after escaping from Capua, the Gladiators went directly to Vesuvius. For more than two months, they've been active in the south, so the Capua People had no idea the rebel army would suddenly attack again. They hurriedly closed the city gates, unable to bring in residents and supplies from outside.

The panicked Capua People could only stand on the city walls, watching helplessly as the rebel soldiers swept around Capua, breaking one Gladiator School after another. They recruited nearly a thousand Gladiators into their ranks and seized a large number of supplies, then successfully returned to camp.

With their strength enhanced, the rebel army's activity wasn't limited to the northern Vesuvius Region. They began expanding throughout the Vesuvius Region, even threatening nearby towns and occasionally cutting off Ania Avenue.

Chapter 52: Chapter 51 The Growing Supply Camp Guard

By the end of August, the rebel army's numbers had reached nearly ten thousand. They had to divide into camps, which further reinforced their complete control over the northern region of Vesuvius. Towns like Napolet were suffering and constantly sent envoys to Rome for help.

"Leader, when the people here saw us coming, those overseers drove the slaves into hiding in that farm over there, but a few slaves managed to escape in time, and I brought them with us."

"Well done!" Maximus loudly praised Hagux, who was on horseback.

Hagux's face split into a grin. Although he was slender and young, both of his parents were Gauls captured in war, becoming farm slaves responsible for tending cattle and horses. He was born on the farm, essentially a house-born slave, and worked with his parents from a young age. Once, his master invited friends for a visit, and after feasting, they intended to go horseback riding, but a drunken friend fell off the horse and broke his leg. The master blamed Hagux's father and beat him to death on the spot to appease his friend. Hagux's mother, heartbroken by the news, soon fell ill and died. Hagux buried his hatred deep within.

When the rebel army breached the farm in May, he joined them voluntarily and was assigned to the supply camp, under the transport team. By late July, Maximus decided to form a horseback squad within the supply camp for message delivery during peace and enemy scouting during war. Being an elder in the supply camp, adept at riding, and clever, Hagux was promoted to head this four-man squad.

Maximus turned his gaze to the three slaves behind Hagux: with their dark reddish skin, rough skin texture, tense muscles, large joints, slightly hunched postures, and aged faces...

Now, Maximus had some experience in observing slaves and knew they must be engaged in long-term field labor. So he kindly asked, "Do you know about the situation of this farm? Can you tell me how many people are there? How many are equipped with weapons and capable of fighting?"

The three nervously scanned the fully armed troop before them, finally focusing on Maximus, clad in the shining armor of a Roman officer. The youngest among them cautiously asked, "Are you really the... the slave troop led by Spartacus?"

"Indeed, we are! These armors we stripped off defeated Roman soldiers. Today, we're here on special orders from leader Spartacus to rescue you," Maximus responded with a smile, clearly recognizing how well-equipped his troop appeared to these slaves.

The slaves visibly eased their doubts and excitedly said, "We've long heard of you killing those brutal Roman nobles and farm managers in the mountains (referring to the northern Vesuvius) and rescuing many slaves. We wanted to join you for a long time, but recently the farm managers and guards have been watching us too closely. The journey is too far. A few brothers escaped but were captured, beaten to a pulp in front of us... and finally hanged at the courtyard gate—"

"Rest assured, now that we are here, we will make those noble dogs pay in blood!" said Hagux angrily.

"Oh, this farm has over 300 slaves, originally with one manager and thirty guards. About ten days ago, it increased to 50." The young slave reddened his eyes, raised his right hand above his head, and tiptoed to illustrate: "The farm is quite extensive, with the courtyard walls about this high..."

Hearing the number of people in the farm, Maximus wasn't surprised. This large wheat-growing farm covered at least a thousand acres and required numerous slaves, so naturally, many were involved in overseeing them.

"Finally, a good fight to engage in!" Hagux said excitedly.

Maximus felt equally thrilled. In recent days, they raided a few times and only encountered vineyards with merely a few enemies and a few slaves. As they crossed the southern edge of the Vesuvius region, close to Pompey and Lucania, they finally found a target that could well-train the troop. Yet, he kept his expression calm, pointed towards the farm's direction, and shouted, "Lower the advance speed, Guards, towards the farm ahead!"

Led by Fesaros, the team officers immediately relayed the orders, and the two-column formation of over three hundred soldiers quickly reduced their pace.

Seeing the effect of over two months of military training, Flanitnus felt satisfied and also praised, "Maximus, your decision to slow down before the fight was correct. It allows the soldiers to regain energy and boost morale."

"Flanitnus, feel free to offer criticism more often, so I can improve quickly," Maximus joked. Over the past two months, he had been rigorously undergoing military training and frequently sought Flanitnus's guidance, leading to a good friendship between the two.

"As per the agreement beforehand, our military advisory team will not interfere this time. We will propose critiques based on the situation after the battle," Flanitnus said solemnly.

"Rest assured, I won't let you down," Maximus replied confidently.

Amidst golden, heavy wheat waves stood a white manor. Behind the approximately three-meter high walls stood numerous armed individuals.

"All troops halt!" Maximus raised his right arm and shouted loudly, "Prepare to form up!"

Upon receiving the order, the guard soldiers quickly halted their march, followed by shouts from the officers: "First team, stand over here!... Brothers of the second team, come here!... Third team, change formation from column to line on the spot!..."

Amidst the noisy and chaotic sounds, three hundred soldiers formed three adjacent small phalanxes of a hundred each.

"Reporting, Leader, the First Guard Squadron is in formation!" Fesaros, wearing Roman Centurion Armor with horizontal crests, solemnly saluted Maximus and reported.

He had been the Guard Captain. With the increase of the guard's numbers, although he still commanded a hundred, his role changed to the First Guard Squadron Captain. He accepted this willingly due to Maximus's patient persuasion and the position of the Second Squadron Captain, Torrelugo.

After being gravely injured, Torrelugo gradually recovered under two months of attentive care by the Medical Team, helped by his robust physique. Gratefully sincere towards the Medical Team, he decided to remain in the Supply Camp. Apart from him, dozens of healed wounded also chose to stay, thus fulfilling one of Maximus's primary objectives when he established the Medical Team. He organized those people and some new recruits assigned to the Supply Camp into a second company of a hundred men, appointed Torrelugo as the Second Guard Squadron Captain.

Originally having some fame in the Gladiator School and holding significant prestige in the Second Battalion, Torrelugo fought valiantly against the Romans, nearly dying, gaining further recognition at a soldiers' assembly for defending the Medical Camp's

nurses. Such a hero choosing to reside quietly in the supply camp guard would leave the lesser-known Fesaros unwilling to ask for more.

"Reporting, Leader, the Third Squadron is also in formation!" The Third Guard Squadron Captain, Camillus, quickly came to report.

This man was a slave sailor from Napolet, an Illyrian, who, inspired by Attutmus's deeds, organized ninety port slaves in mid-July to escape Napolet and incidentally encountered Maximus while joining the rebel army. Learning that most in his group were Illyrians, with Maximus having half-Illyrian blood, he quickly received Hamilcar's agreement to place these people in the Supply Camp, forming the Third Guard Squadron, with Camillus appointed as captain.

After a while, Torrelugo limped over to Maximus. Unlike the other two squadron captains, still recovering from his injuries, he wasn't wearing armor, just a red waist-tied tunic. He didn't salute but shouted directly, "Maximus, my brothers are all ready. Give the order to attack!"

Chapter 53: Chapter 52 Learning in Battle

"Don't be hasty." Maximus said calmly to the three men, "Our purpose this time is to apply what the brothers have learned during training into actual combat. We can't act chaotically like before..."

Torrelugo was straightforward, "Alright, we'll listen to you. Just tell us what to do."

Maximus turned around and shouted, "Crossbow Cannons, ready!"

The ten Crossbow Gunners at the rear immediately lifted two Crossbow Cannons from the cart and placed them at the front of the formation, assembling them under the guidance of the military advisory group.

"Target the wooden gate of the farm!" After Maximus gave the order, two lead balls were launched, hitting the wall near the wooden gate, leaving two pits and causing a commotion among the opponents inside.

Another two rounds of lead balls were fired, but the wooden gate remained unhit, though many cracks appeared on the surrounding wall.

"These Crossbow Cannons are intimidating, but they're not that effective. Might as well have the brothers charge directly!" Torrelugo couldn't help but shout.

Before Maximus could respond, a member of the military advisory group interjected, "They've only trained for a short time, missing the target is normal. How about we handle it instead?"

"No need, we have plenty of time. If we don't train them properly now, how can we expect them to perform in major battles in the future?" Maximus said loudly on purpose.

Hearing Maximus' words, the Crossbow Gunners focused harder, and the next two rounds of bombardment not only hit the wooden gate but also collapsed part of the adjacent wall, leaving a large gap at the front of the farm.

Ignoring the chaos within the farm, Maximus issued orders with composure, "Fesaros, lead the First Squadron to attack the main gate."

"Yes!" Fesaros responded excitedly.

"Hold on!" Maximus followed up with a question, "If you approach the gap and the enemy keeps throwing javelins at you from the wall, what will you do?"

Fesaros thought for a moment and answered, "We'll form a turtle formation and push through."

"Then that's the plan. I want to see how well your First Squadron has mastered the turtle formation." Maximus then turned to Torrelugo and Camillus, "Second and Third Squadrons, have your Soldiers retrieve long ladders from the carts. Once the First Squadron has drawn the enemy's attention, Second Squadron will climb the front wall of the farm and Third Squadron will circle around to attack from the rear. Torrelugo, you're injured, stay behind and command, don't join the assault."

"Don't worry, Maximus. I'm not stupid, I'd like to live a few more years." Torrelugo laughed heartily.

The three Centurion groups swiftly moved into action.

Within moments, three hundred Soldiers charged toward the farm a hundred meters away, their figures spread across the flat fields as they ran, creating a significant momentum that stirred a sense of commanding boldness in Maximus.

Of course, though the Supply Camp managed resources, not all three hundred Soldiers were fully armed. Over half the Soldiers in the Third Squadron wore only simple garments and wielded wooden spears, which is why Maximus directed them to attack from the rear to minimize unnecessary casualties.

There was no alternative. The rebel army had grown rapidly in numbers, and the stock of weapons and armor was severely insufficient. As the head of the Supply Camp, if Maximus prioritized his own squad's equipment needs, dissatisfaction among other leaders would surely arise. However, after today's battle, the equipment of the Soldiers in the Third Squadron should be significantly improved.

The fighting quickly ended. In fact, when the Crossbow Cannons broke through the gate and the fully armed Guard Soldiers began their assault, many of the enemies inside the farm were already disheartened. Still, the three Squadrons focused on thoroughly executing the tactics Maximus had laid out, ignoring offers of surrender and capturing everyone after storming the farm.

Learning that the troops had secured the farm with only five Soldiers lightly injured, Maximus did not revel in the victory. Instead, he asked Flanitnus, "What's your assessment of this battle?"

Flanitnus replied seriously, "The tactics you planned and the Soldiers' entire execution were flawless, which made the battle proceed smoothly with minimal casualties. However—" Flantillus shifted his tone to evaluate, "You were attacking only a farm. The enemy was merely a group of farm guards who couldn't pose a real challenge. If it were a small town defended by a hundred Roman Soldiers, the lightweight Crossbow Cannons wouldn't be able to break through the gate. What then?"

Maximus responded immediately, "Attacking a small town with three hundred Soldiers against a hundred defenders would be unwise. I'd abandon the attempt unless the number of troops increased to a thousand. Only then would I consider it."

"What if you had 1,000 Soldiers?" Flanitnus pressed.

"I'd begin by constructing a camp..." Maximus pondered aloud, "...We may lack heavy Crossbow Cannons, but the Supply Camp has builders. We can make Siege Carriages, correct?" He glanced at the military advisory group as he spoke.

Flanitnus nodded.

"Siege Towers, then?"

"We can make them, though they'll take considerable time." Flanitnus reminded.

"That's fine. During that time, we can focus on other things." Maximus stomped the ground lightly. "With this loose soil, we could deploy Soldiers to quietly dig tunnels leading beneath the town's walls, causing them to collapse."

"Experienced defenders would anticipate that."

Maximus calmly replied, "But they'd still need to allocate forces to guard against it. A hundred defenders won't be sufficient to fully cover the entire town's walls. I'd first use lightweight Crossbow Cannons to bombard the ramparts, disrupt their morale, then use Siege Carriages and Siege Towers to attack the gate and walls directly, diverting their attention. Meanwhile, others would scale the walls using ladders, and the tunnels would play a covert role... such a coordinated assault—could they hold out?"

Flanitus paused briefly before saying, "But if you commit all your forces and the enemy receives reinforcements?"

"There you go, raising the stakes. At first it was just a small town, now there are reinforcements, and soon you'll say my supply line is cut too... With you as the enemy's ally, how could I possibly win?" Maximus joked.

Flanitus said seriously, "I believe you've learned a lot already. All you lack is experience."

"It's rare for you, my instructor, to give praise. Makes me feel a bit proud." Maximus laughed heartily and waved his hand, "Let's head to the farm and reap the fruits of our victory. Volenus, go ahead and inventory the supplies."

"Got it." Volenus headed toward the farm, followed by Akegu, Casius, Magus, and several other youths. These children listened to Maximus' lectures every night and practiced during the day in the warehouse. Their arithmetic skills had advanced rapidly, and they were now capable of aiding the Supply Camp significantly.

"Let's get to work."

Maximus' next task was a public trial in front of the newly freed farm slaves. The captives would then be handed to the slaves for punishment, often resulting in execution by the outraged slaves who, in turn, would mostly volunteer to join the rebel army. Some, due to their favorable impression of the Supply Camp, would proactively request assignments there.

This strategy—raid, trial, and recruitment—had proven highly effective for Maximus during these expeditions.

Once the trial concluded and Volenus finished inventorying the supplies, Maximus listened to his report with a frown, "Such a large farm, so many people, yet so little grain?!"

"That's normal." Volenus, familiar with agriculture, explained, "The wheat in the fields outside is ripe and ready to harvest. With fresh grain available soon, there's no reason for them to store much older grain."

Maximus considered briefly and suggested, "How about we stay here another day? Have the Soldiers help the slaves harvest the wheat in the fields. After collecting it, we can transport it back."

The rebel army's rapid growth had caused significant strain on food supplies, prompting leaders to send teams to gather provisions urgently. This was why the Supply Camp Guard was permitted to raid over these past few days.

"We're too far from the camp. What if enemies attack while the Soldiers are harvesting?" Volenus expressed concern.

Chapter 54: Chapter 53 Rome Attacks Again

"We arrived suddenly, and the only ones who could muster an army to attack within a day nearby... I'm afraid only Pompey and Lucania. Flanitus, is it possible for them to send an army?"

"How dare the Pompeians come out to provoke us? As for Lucania—" Flanitus showed a complex expression: "As far as I know, this is a colonial town built by that dictator to settle his soldiers. If they have not lost their fighting spirit after more than a decade, they might indeed send troops to attack..."

"If Lucania were to dispatch troops, how many would they send?"

"I have no idea." Flanitus shrugged: "After Sula attacked Rome, I became a slave. It was while we were repairing the Roman Road that we heard about the establishment of Lucania's colonial town in southern Campania. As for how many soldiers are stationed in the city? How many residents are there now?... How could I possibly know? However, when you caused a stir in the Vesuvius Region earlier, Lucania made no movement at all, so if we don't provoke them, they likely won't provoke us."

"According to the interrogation just now, the owner of this farm is an elder from Rome with no relation to the Lucania people..." Maximus mused and said solemnly: "We've marched this far, managing to capture such a large farm. If we simply return, it will not only affect morale, but I fear other groups might mock us when they learn of this. Moreover, leaving such a vast wheat field behind would be too much of a waste... I have decided we will harvest these wheat fields before heading back!"

Maximus paused, then proceeded with the deployment: "I will have Hagux lead a reconnaissance team toward the southeast to investigate Lucania City's movements, while also sending someone to report our situation to the camp. Three platoons' worth of soldiers will lead these slaves to swiftly harvest the wheat fields. Vorenius, you'll be in charge of the specific arrangements."

"Uh..." Vorenius was taken aback for a moment, then responded, "Okay."

"Flanitus, do you see anything else that needs attention?"

"I don't think you should have everyone go to harvest the wheat, at least leave one platoon to guard the farm in case of any accidents."

"...Makes sense, I was a bit hasty." Maximus thought it over and candidly admitted his mistake: "Then let's have the first platoon guard the farm, and once the other platoons

are exhausted, rotate with them. This way it's fair and allows them to recover their strength. What do you think?"

Flanitus nodded. This young rebel leader's ability to humbly ask for advice and adopt suggestions is one of the reasons why Flanitus and the others are willing to stay in the Supply Camp and work for him.

"Vorenius, can we finish the harvest in one day?"

Vorenius considered and said: "...The captives just mentioned there are about 1,270 acres of wheat fields here. Our two platoons plus over 400 slaves, more than 600 people, all are very capable workers. If arranged well, one day should be enough."

"Then I'll leave the arrangements to you. If there's anything you need me to do, just let me know."

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Maximus, leading the Guard, stayed at the farm. The once-blood-boiling battle scene quickly turned into a scene of toiling sweat profusely.

During this time, Hagux reported several times of "small groups of Lukania people approaching to investigate," but ultimately Lucania did not dispatch any troops to launch an attack.

When the soldiers finally finished harvesting the wheat fields and Maximus issued the "return to camp" order, he finally let out a long sigh of relief.

Though nothing unusual happened during this day, Maximus remained on edge throughout. It was his first time away from the team, executing such a dangerous mission alone, with the lives of hundreds hanging on him, causing immense pressure, but it was also a tremendous training for his character.

When the Guard from the Supply Camp returned, fifteen horse-drawn carts fully loaded with wheat (five of which came from this farm and were originally used for grain trade), three ox carts full of wheat, and more than 400 slaves, except for a few women, each carried a sack of wheat on their backs. Some remaining wheat could not be taken, but Maximus did not order it destroyed; instead, it was neatly piled in the farm's warehouse, waiting for the right person to discover it so as not to waste it.

Nearly 800 people set out on their return journey early in the morning. Due to the burden of supplies, the journey involved frequent stops, and it took them an entire day to cover a mere twenty-five-mile distance, reaching the camp by dusk.

Maximus barely had time to catch his breath before he was greeted by the rebel army headquarters' messenger: Spartacus was calling for an urgent Military Commander Conference.

When Maximus arrived at the farm's hall, the other rebel leaders were already seated inside.

"I truly apologize for being late!" Maximus immediately greeted everyone with an apology.

"I never expected Maximus to be so daring, taking only 300 soldiers to venture deep into the south. We were all worried for you; you didn't run into any danger, did you?" Spartacus asked with concern.

"What's there to worry about? Now the entire Vesuvius Region and its surroundings are our domain. Who dares provoke us?" Cross chimed in.

"Indeed, there wasn't any danger. We seized a large farm, suffering no casualties and harvested about 36,200 kilograms of wheat, with over 400 slaves joining our ranks," Maximus said with ease.

"So much wheat! This greatly eases the pressure on our food supply!" Hamilcar said joyfully.

"After the meeting ends, I'll need you to inventory the supplies and slaves we brought back." Maximus said to his mentor.

"Alright," Hamilcar nodded.

"Your Guard at the Supply Camp did a great job this time!" Spartacus praised before looking around. His expression turned solemn as he continued: "The reason for today's urgent meeting is that our scouts received intelligence that a legion of Romans has already left Rome and is heading toward us."

"A legion?!" Antonix's face changed.

"It's just one legion; if they dare come, we can definitely defeat them!" Enomai said without fear.

"Absolutely, now our troops number close to ten thousand, and after two months of training, their combat effectiveness has greatly improved. We can certainly defeat them in field battles!" Cross was also full of confidence.

Attutmus, a Great Captain who joined the rebellion later, had a rough and rugged appearance. His figure was robust and agile, and having spent years battling the waves on the sea, he was very bold. Though he had never experienced battle, he expressed

boldly without any shock, "Once the Roman Army arrives, we'll fight them! Since we were able to defeat them once, we can defeat them a second time!"

"Everyone is right; we need not worry about the Roman legion's attack." Spartacus saw the group's morale far exceeded last time, and seized the opportunity to continue, "But we shouldn't wait for the Roman Army to attack; we should take the initiative to attack them."

"Take the initiative to attack?!" The others were stunned; this was completely unexpected: before the last battle with the Romans, Spartacus was more cautious than them, but this time he had become so aggressive.

However, Spartacus did not consider himself aggressive. Instead, he had developed a broad tactical strategy after learning lessons from the previous battles and carefully analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of the Romans and the rebel army. He did not elaborate but glanced at Hamilcar.

Hamilcar understood and said, "According to the information obtained by the scouts, the legion sent by the Romans this time is marching along Ladaya Avenue, divided into two parts, with the vanguard of 2,000 arriving in Cales this afternoon, and the main force of 4,000 in Suissa, about half a day apart from each other—"

Chapter 55: Chapter 54 The Zealous Furrius

"I understand now." Cross suddenly realized and slapped his thigh forcefully.

"Spartacus, you want to take advantage of the fact that these two enemy armies have not yet merged, launch a preemptive strike, first eliminate the vanguard force of 2,000 men, and then engage their main army in battle. This way, defeating them will become much easier!"

"Exactly!" Spartacus leaned forward, his large eyes glimmering with light. "The Romans dare to divide their forces and march separately, surely thinking they're safe here on their own land. But as they approach us, they'll inevitably regroup. Therefore, we cannot miss this splendid chance to defeat them! My suggestion is—tomorrow morning, we rally five battalions and march quickly north along Ania Avenue in order to capture the Romans' vanguard and obliterate it first."

"Spartacus." Antonix hesitated and asked, "...If all 8,000 of us move north together, we won't be able to hide from the enemy. What if they retreat into the city for defense? You do realize Capua is not far north of the enemy's vanguard."

Spartacus had already thought this through. His eyes sparkled, his expression resolute as he answered, "Precisely because Capua is close to the enemy's vanguard, by the time our forces approach, they'll likely have passed beyond Capua. We suspect they won't have enough time to reach the next town, Suysula, before we intercept them. The last time the Roman army didn't garrison in Capua, the same should apply this time..."

If the Roman vanguard decides not to behave as we expect and chooses to retreat to merge with their main force after hearing of our approach, then we will continue advancing north and seek a decisive battle against the entire Roman legion. In any case, we must not passively wait for the enemy to attack our camp before engaging them in combat!"

"There's nothing scary about the Romans; I support Spartacus' proposal!" Enomai responded enthusiastically.

"I agree too." Cross followed suit, expressing his approval. "Spartacus' plan will succeed. Given the Romans' arrogance, they're unlikely to retreat after learning of our assault."

The atmosphere in the hall became heated; even the cautious Antonix no longer voiced opposition.

Spartacus spoke again, "If our army moves out to intercept the Roman legion, the camp will be left vulnerable. The Neapolitans may take advantage of this. I suggest appointing Maximus to defend the camp—it only needs to be held for two or three days before we lead our forces back."

Maximus didn't expect to lead the Guards and march alongside the main force. After all, the other teams in the supply camp remained at the base, and it was logical for him to stay behind. He nodded in agreement, saying, "Alright, you can head to battle without worries. I'll defend the camp."

Even Cross didn't object to this, as no one else besides Maximus could take on this responsibility while the other leaders were heading out.

"Although the Neapolitan City Guards aren't highly capable in combat, Maximus' troops are far too small. As a precaution, I suggest transferring the more than 400 slaves Maximus brought back today to the supply camp, thereby bolstering its defenses." Hamilcar's remarks made Maximus inwardly delighted.

"I think that's acceptable," Spartacus responded indifferently. He glanced at everyone and said, "Let's formally vote on the proposals I've just presented."

In truth, everyone had already reached a consensus earlier. The vote was merely a procedural step. Among the seven people in the hall, six had voting rights (Maximus had gained voting rights earlier this August due to his outstanding performance in the supply camp, while Attutmus, having joined recently, only held participatory and advisory rights). The final result was unanimous approval.

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After Valerius was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the rebellion suppression forces, he was inundated with visitors. Many Elders and Nobles recommended their family's descendants to him, and he did not reject any, listing them all on his expedition roster.

Nonetheless, as a seasoned veteran, he didn't lose his head completely. Once soldiers were recruited, he discovered that almost all were fresh recruits. Instead of rushing to deploy, he intensified the army's training to avoid repeating Grabo's disastrous downfall.

He applied to the Senate for "additional time to train the soldiers to ensure a smoother suppression of the rebellion," which the Senate granted after due deliberation.

However, while he was engrossed in training the troops, the Roman civilians began to feel the impact of having Ania Avenue cut off and the chaos in southern Campania disrupt their lives. Moreover, the incessant calls for aid from Campania towns such as Napolet and Capua significantly burdened the Senate. Eventually, the Senate unanimously passed a resolution requiring Valerius to deploy his forces immediately.

This abrupt directive left Valerius somewhat caught off guard. Since Grabo's campaign had depleted the Roman armory's inventory last time, Valerius—having thought there was still enough time—had not urged refilling stock. As a result, his troops remained inadequately equipped.

To avoid dissatisfaction from the Senate, Valerius had no choice but to let Furrius, the wide-band People's Guardian of the military, lead 2,000 fully-armed soldiers to depart first.

Under Valerius' relentless pressure, the Roman armory barely managed to equip the remaining soldiers the next day. Therefore, he ordered Military Camp Commander Cassinius to lead the other 4,000 men to quickly set off. Meanwhile, he himself led the cavalry half a day later, transporting the scarce military supplies he recently acquired, and casually marched south.

Dividing an army into three parts, spaced half a day apart from each other, is a cardinal mistake in military strategy. But Valerius wasn't overly concerned, as he had thoroughly reviewed Grabo's battles with the rebel slaves. Until Grabo's forces approached the rebels' camp, the slaves had been forced to come out and fight. This indicated they lacked the courage to launch an active offense. Moreover, he had already prearranged for Furrius and Cassinius to rendezvous at Capua first before proceeding toward the rebel camp together.

Valerius' plan seemed sound, but he underestimated the rebel army and overlooked one individual.

Furrius, who served as Financial Officer before becoming a Roman Elder, was included in the army upon Little Sula's strong recommendation. Valerius ultimately appointed him as wide-band People's Guardian.

Wide-band People's Guardians differ from regular Guardians not just in wearing a sash on their tunics; more critically, the role is reserved for those from the Elder class. If the Legion Commander were to encounter an accident, the wide-band Guardian could assume command of the entire legion. Such an important position was granted to Furrius not just to give face to Little Sula but also due to Furrius' own credentials.

Furrius had served as Financial Officer in the Iberian Province under Pompey, who spoke highly of him, acknowledging his military experience. During his time as Elder, unlike some younger Elders who acted impulsively, Furrius always appeared steady.

Thus, Valerius trusted the calm young Elder to execute orders effectively. However, he overlooked the fact that every noble Roman youth harbors intense aspirations for glory, and Furrius was no exception. Furthermore, Furrius' proximity to Pompey during their time in the Iberian Province only magnified these ambitions. If Furrius behaved conservatively in the Senate, it was merely because it was an arena dominated by elder figures, where youthful recklessness was frowned upon... Now, faced with an opportunity, Furrius seized it without hesitation.

Valerius' order for Furrius to halt at Capua and wait for the slower units to join him was discarded. Upon arriving at Capua, Furrius did not stop but continued marching south along Ania Avenue.

In his mind, Grabo had easily crushed the slave rebel army with 3,000 soldiers; even with 1,000 fewer men, he believed he could achieve the same feat without repeating Grabo's foolish mistakes. If he successfully quelled the rebellion alone, not only would he earn immense praise from the Roman citizens but also greatly enhance his standing in the Senate's political scene...