

Rome Must Perish

Chapter 56: Chapter 55 Deception

Thinking of this, Furrius was filled with energy and excitedly ordered once again: Have the soldiers quicken their march!

A Centurion heard this and couldn't help but remind, "Sir, it's scorching today, we must prevent the soldiers from succumbing to heatstroke due to over-marching!"

Furrius glared at him and retorted, "Precisely because it's so hot, we need to speed up and strive to reach Naples as soon as possible. Then, I'll arrange for the Neapolitans to provide wine from Vesuvius to quench the soldiers' thirst."

Furrius also had his subordinate convey his explanation down the line, and the soldiers ceased their complaints, instead erupting in cheers.

Seeing this, Furrius grinned smugly and looked up at the blazing sun in the sky: Cassinius, the camp officer, was once Valerius's comrade-in-arms. As a seasoned veteran, he should slow the march under such scorching conditions... This way, by the time I set out from Naples to attack the slave camp tomorrow, Cassinius's troops will be more than half a day's march behind, and once I defeat those slaves, they might not even make it in time...

Just as Furrius was lost in his thoughts, a Roman Cavalryman raised a long spear adorned with feathers (indicating he was a temporary messenger to deliver urgent news) and galloped forward, with soldiers making way for him.

"Report, sir, more than five thousand slaves are approaching us!" The scout reported to Furrius with a tense expression.

"Five thousand slaves..." Furrius listened, not feeling tense but rather very excited: "These lowly slaves dare not stay in their camp and even dare to initiate an attack on me! They come at just the right time, saving us considerable effort!"

"Sir, there may be far more than 5000 of them, and they also have cavalry who drove us away, so we could not probe further." The scout reminded.

"Cavalry?!" Furrius was taken aback and quickly asked, "How are these slaves equipped?"

"Most of them don't have armor, not even weapons, and wield farming tools and sticks. Only a few are equipped like us, likely acquired in the last battle."

Furrius felt more confident and immediately asked, "How far are these slaves from us?"

"Uh... About six miles when I left."

Furrius stopped asking questions and turned to the orderly: "Order the soldiers to halt immediately, don their armor, grab their sword and shield, and form up to the south to prepare for the enemy!"

The orderly, having also heard the scout's report, did not voice objections like "The enemy comes aggressively; we should retreat temporarily." Instead, he believed Furrius's decision was only natural: How could Roman citizens retreat before a rabble of lowly slaves, no matter how many came?

With this mindset, he rode alongside the marching column, repeatedly shouting loudly.

The soldiers stopped advancing, perhaps due to hearing that the oncoming enemies were slaves, they appeared more composed, calmly laying down their Forka Wood Sticks resting on their shoulders, removing the packs from their heads, taking square shields from under cloth covers, wearing helmets hung from their chests, then began forming ranks under the team officers' command. Meanwhile, the military slaves collected the soldiers' packs, took the accompanying wagons, and hid behind the formation... The entire process was done in a disciplined manner, a product of two months of rigorous training.

The soldiers' performance pleased Furrius. Now commanding 4 battalions, with about 2000 men, not enough to form a traditional formation, he ordered the soldiers to leave Ania Avenue, align themselves tightly in a straight line formation to the south on the west side of the road.

Soon after the Roman soldiers finished forming up, they saw the shadow of the enemy in the distance: these enemies had no magnificent banners, no glittering armors, no sharp weapons, no orderly formations. They were ragged, disorganized, pushing and shoving, noisily advancing along Ania Avenue, surging northward...

"This is our enemy? Even my old dad could beat them." A soldier's sarcastic remark drew laughter from those around.

The Roman soldiers appeared relaxed, as did Furrius; he hoped these foolish slaves would charge recklessly and then he could lead his army to deliver a heavy blow...

But then he saw a dozen Slave Cavalry emerge from the side of the avenue, rushing to the front of the enemy, shouting something, and shortly after the enemy halted and began attempting to form ranks...

Furrius felt uneasy, tempted to take advantage of the enemy's chaos to have his soldiers launch an attack. But he quickly restrained himself, considering the

approximately mile-long distance. An aggressive charge might scare these slaves off before reaching them, making it hard for heavily armored soldiers to chase scantily clad slaves. After that, he still had to lead an attack on the slave camp. It was better to wait for the enemy to come willingly to their deaths.

Furrius made up his mind, continuing to stand mounted before the array, patiently observing the enemy...

Then, he saw the enemy before him, after a bout of chaos, becoming organized: the foremost enemy formed a simple array and began moving sideways, while those behind kept flooding forward, like a bamboo stem growing continuously from a single point into a line, a line whose length had surpassed the array and kept extending...

Furrius grew increasingly uneasy, his eyes widening: At the center of the enemy line emerged fully armed soldiers, and more of them, gleaming under the sun...

Damn scout! Are you blind? Most of the enemy with simplistic gear! They have more armored soldiers than us!... Furrius cursed inwardly, almost issuing a retreat order, but rationality reminded him: Retreating before the battle is taboo, even hundreds of meters apart, his heavily armored soldiers couldn't run far before being overtaken by the nearly bare-handed slaves on the enemy flanks, inevitably leading to a rout. Retreating without contact would bring not only accountability from the Senate but bring public shame upon his return to Rome, ending his life!

Considering this, Furrius resolutely turned around, seeing the apprehension on the soldiers' faces, and raised his right arm, loudly proclaiming, "Soldiers, you are noble Roman citizens, they are but slaves to be commanded by you, no matter their numbers, they cannot overcome us, the ones blessed by Jupiter with fine military tradition! Soldiers, for Rome's glory, fight to the death! Fight to the death!..."

Under Furrius's rousing words, the soldiers' courage surged, and they shouted along, "Fight to the death!! Fight to the death!!!..."

At this moment, Spartacus stood in the central front of the rebel army array, looking with joy at the Roman formation ahead: The Romans didn't flee, this is excellent!

Knowing the need to create an illusion for the Romans, he specifically arranged the Fifth and Fourth Battalion as the vanguard (most in these battalions had neither armor nor weapons, especially the Fifth), even having Okmar lead the cavalry to drive away the Roman scouts... Now it appeared the plan succeeded!... Spartacus raised his short sword excitedly, pointing forward forcefully: "Attack!"

This time he didn't need to act first to lead the entire formation; upon hearing his shout, a few horn players next to him immediately sounded their copper horns: "Woo!..."

Standing at the forefront of their respective units, Cross, Enomai, Antonix, and Attutmus, upon hearing the attack command, turned back and shouted, "Brothers, follow me forward!"

The entire formation began moving forward, ahead lay the Roman Army that dominated the Mediterranean. Originating as slaves, the soldiers' hands, sweaty from nervousness as they gripped their weapons, were tense, but within this massive formation, hearing comrades' excited shouts, before them the strong, agile backs of the Gladiators, their fear waned, the desire for revenge surged, and their steps quickened...

Chapter 57: Chapter 56 Defeating Furrius

The speed of advancement on both wings of the rebel army was the fastest, and their formation was more chaotic, as most of them were soldiers who joined the rebel army later, so they wore less armor and had been trained for a shorter period. The soldiers in the middle of the rebel army were fully armed. After two months of rigorous training, they could control their advance speed better and maintain a good formation...

Therefore, when the rebel army was about to approach the Roman Formation, their entire front line, which was more than three times longer than the Roman Formation, turned into a winding semicircle. The middle of the rebel army faced the Roman Formation, with both wings extending like arms, ready to embrace the Roman Formation...

The Roman Soldiers, who had been bolstered by Furrius and prepared to face the enemy's attack, looked at the increasingly close long enemy formation and listened to the thunderous roars from the opposite side, especially when they saw the fully armed enemies marching towards them face-first with terrifying faces and angry eyes... The Roman Soldiers felt apprehensive. After all, they had only been trained for two months and were still new recruits.

But before they could fully understand this first battle of their lives, the wings of the rebel army quickly closed in within thirty meters of the flanks of the Roman Formation.

Should the javelins be thrown or not?... Furrius was somewhat hesitant because if they threw them, then the enemies attacking from the front could charge without any scruples.

In fact, before he could give the order, the soldiers had already thrown their heavy spears one after another. Although their targets were too scattered, the rebel soldiers on both wings, due to their poor equipment, suffered certain casualties, achieving a considerable deterrent effect.

But immediately, the soldiers in the middle of the rebel army, led by Spartacus, launched a charge. They held their square shields at an angle, wielded short swords, and lunged forward with large strides... This fierce momentum frightened the Roman

Soldiers, who still had heavy spears, into hurriedly throwing them out, but it was like a stone thrown into a torrent, making no splash at all.

This time, Spartacus concentrated the over 1,000 gladiators he had freed in Capua at the very front of the middle line. They were strong and ferocious, like tigers descending the mountain, holding shields, crashing their bodies, and swiftly stabbing with their swords through gaps. Their killing movements were skillful and smooth. As soon as the two armies made contact, the screams of the Roman Soldiers resounded one after another.

Subsequently, they pushed forward with the combined efforts of the soldiers behind them, and gaps soon appeared in the tightly arranged Roman Formation. The rebel soldiers pressed forward like a stream of water, trying to expand these gaps...

Furrius never imagined that the attack of these rebellious slaves, whom he hadn't taken seriously, would be so fierce, disrupting his military formation as soon as they engaged.

But what shocked him even more was that the enemy's wings also swiftly circled from the flank and from behind, creating a momentum as if to encircle and devour the entire Roman Army. Despite their poor equipment and weak combat power, could the Roman recruits, whose morale was floating, still have the courage to fight on when facing encirclement?

Thinking of this, he anxiously shouted loudly, "Soldiers, hold your ground! Hold your ground! The reinforcements led by Cassinius will soon arrive! The reinforcements are coming soon!..."

However, his shouting didn't have much effect on the bustling battlefield. Instead, another voice quickly spread through the Roman Formation: "We've been surrounded!!!!... Run!!!!..."

The Roman Formation collapsed. The soldiers dropped their shields and armor, scrambling to escape through the unclosed gap of the rebel army...

Furrius was bewilderedly swept along by the routing soldiers towards the rear when suddenly someone grabbed him, pulling him off his horse. Before he could get up, he was trampled by countless feet...

In just half an hour, the entire battle had ended. Except for a few Roman Soldiers who managed to escape and were still being pursued by the rebel soldiers, most had either died in battle or been captured.

Spartacus had anticipated winning, but he hadn't expected the battle to end so quickly. So when several leaders gathered to discuss the next steps, he said without hesitation, "Stick to our original plan; continue north, and look for opportunities to eliminate Rome's main force."

"I agree!" Cross immediately responded loudly, "In this battle, we suffered minimal casualties and won easily. This Roman Army's combat power isn't much, we can definitely win another fight!"

"It's not that the Roman Army's combat power is lacking, but that we've become stronger!" Antonix said with a smile, as victory also made him more confident.

"We must continue to advance north and seek out the Roman main force for a decisive battle. Otherwise, if they hear of our victory, they're likely to retreat back to Rome, and we would miss a great opportunity!" Attutmus cautioned.

Upon hearing this, Enomai hurriedly urged, "We have to act quickly and not let them escape!"

Seeing everyone agreed to fight again, Spartacus continued, "Attutmus, detach four hundred soldiers from your battalion to be temporarily led by Hamilcar, responsible for cleaning the battlefield and caring for the wounded brothers. The rest, gather your soldiers and march north along the main road."

"Alright!" Attutmus responded promptly.

"Spartacus, don't forget about the Roman prisoners!" Antonix reminded.

"Kill them all. We don't have the manpower to look after these guys now." Cross said first.

"That's what we'll do." Spartacus said calmly, his words sealing the fate of those Roman prisoners, then he turned and walked to the other side of the battlefield: "Okmar! Okmar!"

Cavalry Captain Okmar, holding his warhorse, which was munching on wheat in the fields, heard the call and hurried over, "Leader Spartacus, what do you need?"

"Where are your cavalry on alert?"

"Up to Capua, we haven't received any news of another Roman Army coming to aid. Since the battle is over, should I let them come back?"

"No, let your cavalry continue to scout north. Once you spot any Roman Army traces, hurry back and inform us!"

Okmar's spirits immediately lifted, "Are we preparing to attack another Roman Army?!"

"Whether we can defeat them depends on whether you can find them in time!"

"Rest assured, leave it to us!" Okmar replied confidently, turning to his warhorse. But when he mounted his horse, it was so engrossed in its meal that it didn't want to leave, prompting him to raise his arm and slap the horse's haunch hard. The warhorse neighed sharply and suddenly sprinted away.

Having been prepared, Okmar tightened his legs around the horse's belly, gripped the reins firmly, controlled the direction, and led the horse onto the main road. He then blew a sharp whistle.

Soon, more than a dozen cavalry gathered around and together galloped north.

Despite the rebel soldiers being somewhat fatigued after the battle, a brilliant victory made them very excited. Having been accustomed to enduring hardships during their time as slaves, they complied with the leaders' order to "continue northward" without complaint, marching on under the hot sun, albeit at a slower pace than before.

In the afternoon, the troops arrived outside of Capua city.

The Capua People hid within the city, trembling.

Vibias stood on the city wall, silently watching the rebel army outside that stretched out like a long dragon. The memory of the defeat a few months ago surfaced again, and only after a long while did he squeeze out a sentence: "Bring Batiatus up here and give him a severe beating!"

This time, Spartacus, leading the First Battalion, marched at the forefront of the troops, considering that if they encountered a larger Roman main army, the First Battalion soldiers, with the highest armor rate, wouldn't be easily defeated, thus winning time for the subsequent troops to deploy.

Spartacus led the troops to bypass Capua and continue forward, but saw Okmar speeding over from the front, exclaiming excitedly, "Leader Spartacus, we found traces of the Roman Army!"

"Where?!"

"By the Volturno River, the Romans are resting and drinking there!"

Chapter 58: Chapter 57: The Careless Cassinius

The Volturno River, originating from the Abruqi Mountain in the Samnium Region, was once called the mother river by the indigenous Dileni people in the northern Campania area. Its clear waters irrigated a fertile plain, producing Italy's finest wheat grains. The Dileni built twelve towns along its banks, with Capua as its capital. As centuries passed, the Dileni became history, yet the Volturno River continued its quiet flow.

Cassinius led the main force of the Roman Army, enduring the scorching sun, starting from Suissa, exiting the mountains, stepping onto the Campagna Plain, and after marching for five to six hours, they arrived at the banks of the Volturno River in the afternoon.

At this time, it was the hottest part of the day. The exhausted and thirsty soldiers gazed at the clear, gushing river water but couldn't take another step.

Not only were the soldiers like this, but Cassinius, a veteran himself, was also somewhat exhausted, knowing that he had been urging the soldiers to hurry along for days, draining their strength and energy. He thought: since Capua is not far ahead, why not rest here to restore morale?

However, the river section where the stone bridge was located was deep and had high banks, so Cassinius had to lead the troops along the riverbank westward, winding through several bends, stopping at a spot where the river was wide, the water flowed slowly, and there was a large riverbank.

When Cassinius announced the dismissal, the soldiers rushed to the river's edge to scoop water, and some soldiers took off their armor and plunged directly into the river...

Having also drunk water and washed his face, Cassinius found a shady spot to lie down. The firm ground greatly relieved the soreness and discomfort in his legs and waist, and he contentedly closed his eyes...

The majority of the Roman Army's cavalry served as the rear guard under the command of Legion Commander Valerius, while the remaining cavalry squad was entirely assigned to the vanguard for reconnaissance and scouting. The main force in the middle had no cavalry, but Cassinius wasn't too concerned. Not to mention they were still far from Vesuvius; Capua was not far ahead. And even if those slaves made a move, Furrius would send cavalry to notify him.

However, he did not know that while he led the main force to rest by the riverbank, the vanguard had already suffered a disastrous defeat. The fleeing soldiers had taken refuge in Capua, and escaping with their lives was considered fortunate; they hardly thought of notifying the main force. Only a handful of cavalry remembered their mission, yet, as they raced back along the main road and passed the Volturno River, Cassinius had already led his troops down to the riverbank. The winding river, with green trees lining its shores, had concealed them, and the panicked Roman cavalry failed to notice, continuing northward, thus missing them and being quietly discovered by the inquisitive rebel cavalry.

Cassinius was lying on the soft grass, half-asleep, when suddenly he felt vibrations from the ground, like thousands of drum hammers beating on it—strangely chaotic, yet growing ever clearer...

With rich battlefield experience, Cassinius immediately realized that these vibrations could not have been caused by the vanguard force of just over 2,000 men, and they were heading directly towards his location!

Cassinius sprang to his feet and shouted, "Assemble the army!"

At that moment, he realized that during his nap, the soldiers had utterly relaxed, everyone removing their clothes to bathe, and some, finding it crowded, even walked downstream to find better bathing spots.

The soldiers who heard his shout just stared at him in bewilderment, without taking any action.

Cassinius quickly ran over, picked up the copper horn left on the riverbank by a bugler, and blew it forcefully.

"Woo! Woo!... Woo! Woo!..." The assembly call rang out, and the two months of rigorous training took effect. Though reluctant, the nearby soldiers instinctively came ashore, hastily drying off, then donning their tunics, armor, and grabbing their packs before gathering towards Cassinius...

The simplest-dressed Banner Carrier first raised the Eagle Banner; the buglers, yet to fully armor themselves, took up the copper horns, allowing Cassinius to speak once more. He urgently shouted, "Put on your armor quickly, take up your weapons, and prepare for battle formation!"

A soldier dissatisfiedly asked, "Cassinius, are you having us train here?!"

"Fool!" Cassinius cursed, "The enemy is attacking!"

"Why would there be enemies here?" The soldiers responded indifferently, assuming Cassinius was joking.

"Look over there!" the flagman stood on tiptoe, suddenly pointing southeastwards. In the distance, figures appeared on the main road, their armor glaring excessively under the sun.

"That's our unit." The soldiers laughed, thinking Cassinius was seeing things.

"Fools, that's the enemy!" Cassinius didn't bother to explain further, instructing the messenger, "Quick! Hurry and summon the others for assembly, or face Military Law!"

The messenger, scared by the threat, dared not delay and immediately ran downstream.

"My goodness, how can there be so many people?" a soldier exclaimed.

It was no longer just a group of soldiers on the main road, but a long, continuous line. This line left the road, trampling through wheat fields towards them, with more people joining from the rear, until distant vision was filled with dense crowds...

The soldiers could no longer laugh; even in their foolishness, they realized the vanguard force didn't have so many soldiers.

Seeing this, Cassinius oddly calmed down, loudly commanding, "Don't panic, follow me!"

Cassinius's words did nothing to ease the new soldiers' tension. They hurriedly donned their armor while tightly following Cassinius downstream.

Under Okmar's guidance, as Spartacus neared the Volturno River, he spotted the Roman Army a few hundred meters from the main road, on the south side of the riverbank, hidden by wild grass and wheat fields. Upon seeing the scattered, disorganized enemies starting to regroup, he grew anxious and shouted, "Brothers, charge with me, don't give the enemy time to form up!"

So saying, he led by example, jumping into the wheat field, and the soldiers of the First Battalion followed suit. They sprinted through the field, ignoring the dense wheat leaves scratching them, and even when heavy wheat ears were crushed into the soil, there was no time to consider such things now.

Charging through the wheat field, Spartacus took a shortcut and came within range, seeing a Roman Army forming on the riverbank. Though they had raised their square shields, many had sagging breastplates and crooked helmets.

The segmented construction of the Roman Legion Soldier's armor was somewhat complex, and wearing it properly required some patience and time. Therefore, concerned about encountering enemies while marching, Roman soldiers generally marched in their armor. But this time, having taken off their armor to bathe in the river, with the pressing threat of the enemy approaching, properly wearing the armor was not an easy feat.

Spartacus also saw on the enemy's right, downstream on the riverside, soldiers running, trying to join the formations.

Spartacus immediately shouted, "Circle around them, eliminate those scattered ones first!"

The soldiers of the First Battalion, under his lead, made a turn and dashed towards the right side of the Roman formation.

Seeing this, Cassinius was anxious but didn't dare act rashly because more enemies were continuously charging from the wheat field, and if he divided his forces to rescue

them, he might suffer losses like throwing buns to a dog. The painstakingly arranged defensive formation would be disrupted, leaving everyone with no chance of survival.

Watching the fully armed, murderous enemies, Cassinius realized that Furrius was likely already defeated miserably: Damn the Senate! Damn Valerius! These weren't some weak, ignorant slaves, but practically an enemy nation's army with soaring morale! Damn Valerius! Ten years of peace made you complacent, your erroneous decision to split the forces led these young men into a death trap!

Valerius reproached himself in his heart, but outwardly he loudly encouraged, "Soldiers, quickly put on your armor, prepare for defense! The enemies are numerous, and we are surrounded. We must fight bravely to have a chance at survival. Legion Commander Valerius is not far behind, he will surely find a way to come to our aid!"

Chapter 59: Chapter 58 Training Troops

The soldiers were shocked by the onslaught of the enemy tide and witnessed their comrades, who failed to rejoin the formation, being easily killed by the enemy. Cassinius's words stirred up their hunger for survival.

At that moment, a massive wave of enemies surged to the front. Cassinius immediately shouted, "Javelins!"

The Roman soldiers roared fiercely as they hurled their heavy spears with all their might.

The advancing wave comprised the Second Battalion of the rebel army led by Cross. Having previously suffered severe losses from a barrage of javelins during a battle against Grabo, they had trained for this. When the Roman soldiers made their throwing motions, the rebel soldiers had already raised their square shields at an angle. Thousands of javelins rained down but caused minimal casualties. However, the lead-tipped heads pierced into the square shields, and the shafts drooped downward, dragging along the ground. This not only added weight to the shields but also hindered movement.

Although Cross was fierce, he was not without a brain. As he charged at the forefront, he immediately gestured and shouted, "Brothers, halt the advance! Fall back! Fall back! Pull out these damned javelins first, then fight again!..."

Among the soldiers in Cross's Second Battalion, the majority were Gaul gladiators and Gaul slaves. Cross held high prestige within his ranks. With his call, those around him immediately complied, and others followed suit. Some soldiers who had not been hit by javelins stayed and rushed forward with the Third Battalion.

The rain of javelins forced back a large wave of enemies, only to be replaced by another wave charging forward. In the transition between attack and retreat, the enemy displayed some disorder.

Should we shift from defense to offense and let the soldiers seize this opportunity to launch a charge?... A thought instinctively arose in Cassinius's mind, but he quickly suppressed it. If he were fighting alongside his former comrades, he would not hesitate to do so. But now that he was commanding a group of recruits, without the support of their formation, their morale would quickly crumble under enemy encirclement, leaving them as fragile as chicks...

In the brief moment Cassinius hesitated, the enemy had already surged forward to the formation. With no more javelins available, he shouted, "Prepare to engage!"

The soldiers plunged the lower ends of their square shields into the mud before their feet, crouching down behind them to hide most of their bodies. Gripping their short swords tightly, they nervously fixed their eyes on the incoming foes. Behind them, their comrades pressed closely against their backs, standing tall and holding their square shields at chest level, ready to fend off any overhead attacks...

Though the Third Battalion had very few Germanic gladiators, under the leadership of Enomai, these soldiers demonstrated incredible bravery. Roaring with fury, they launched themselves at the Roman formation.

Shield against shield, short sword against short sword, the battle began. The more than 2,000 soldiers of the Third Battalion quickly engulfed the front of the Roman formation.

Cross struggled to remove the javelins embedded in the square shields, preparing to lead his troops in another charge, only to find that the Third Battalion had already completely blocked the passage to the enemy's formation.

Listening to the deafening sounds of battle ahead, the soldiers of the Second Battalion grew anxious. However, Cross remained calm, carefully surveying the surrounding terrain. He realized something unusual about the enemy's deployment: the Roman Army's formation was positioned within a U-shaped river bend, with elevated riverbanks. The Romans had arrayed their forces at the open end, while the other three sides were bordered by water. This not only conserved their manpower but also prevented the rebel army from flanking them, making it difficult to deploy their greater numbers effectively.

Standing on a nearby riverbank and gazing at the deep water below, Cross couldn't help but curse, "Cunning Romans!"

Unwilling to give up, he turned and said, "Someone go down and test the water's depth."

A soldier skilled in swimming quickly stripped off his armor and plunged into the water. He felt the muddy riverbed under his feet as he waded around the Roman Army's position. Upon returning to the shore, he reported, "Chief Cross, the water here is quite deep, and the bottom is full of silt, making it difficult to stand. Additionally, the riverbanks are high and steep, making it hard to climb out."

Abandoning the idea of attacking the enemy from the river's rear, Cross returned to the rear of the Third Battalion while deep in thought. He happened to encounter the hastily arriving Fourth Battalion Commander, Antonix. As soon as Antonix saw Cross, he asked with concern, "What's the current situation?"

Cross briefly explained the situation. Antonix frowned and, after pondering for a moment, suggested, "Should we do what we've done before? Concentrate our gladiators and have them lead the charge at the forefront. Once we break through the enemy's shield formation, the rest should be easy to deal with."

Glancing at the soldiers following him, Cross shook his head and said, "I've just observed the Romans' formation. Due to the terrain, their line is short but thick and dense, and their soldiers seem to have decent morale. However, we've marched all the way here and already fought one battle in between. Our regular soldiers are tired, and you know as well as I do that gladiators, being heavier, expend more energy and are even more exhausted. They don't have the strength to break through the enemy formation. Forcing them to go up might only increase casualties."

Cross paused before continuing, "I do have an idea, though. The Romans are positioned so close to the riverbank and are far fewer in number. Why don't we throw everyone at them and push them straight into the river with all our might?"

Antonix's eyes lit up. "That's a great idea!"

"Indeed, it's a good idea!" A voice came from behind. Antonix turned to see Spartacus standing there, drenched in sweat, accompanied by Hamilcar and Attutmus.

"Spartacus," Cross asked in surprise, "Did you manage to take care of the other enemies so quickly?"

Spartacus wiped his sweat and replied, "Those Roman soldiers had no real will to fight. They didn't dare confront us at all. Most of them weren't even wearing armor and fled along the riverbank. The brothers of the First Battalion had a hard time chasing them. Fortunately, the Fifth Battalion under Attutmus arrived to assist in surrounding and capturing most of them. Only a few escaped, and they're not worth pursuing. I rushed over with Attutmus to join you in taking down the main Roman forces, just in time to hear your discussion—"

Spartacus emphasized, "Cross's idea is a good one, but I think there's no need for us to take out this Roman Army so hastily—"

"Why?" Cross asked, somewhat puzzled.

Spartacus pointed forward, his voice tinged with excitement. "Look at the Roman Army—they're entrenched with their backs to the river, surrounded by us, neither daring to attack nor able to escape. Isn't this a perfect opportunity for training? Let each battalion take turns engaging them. It will not only hone the soldiers' ability to fight in formation but also allow them to rest and recover in rotation."

Cross pondered for a moment before cautioning, "...If we go about it your way, the battle will last a long time. If Roman reinforcements arrive, we'll be in trouble!"

Hamilcar chimed in, "Didn't we already interrogate the captives earlier? Rome has only dispatched one legion here this time. Part of it has already been wiped out, and the remainder is surrounded by us here. Where could reinforcements come from anytime soon? Even if nearby Campania towns dared to send troops to help, would we be afraid of them?"

Both Antonix and Cross showed disdainful smiles.

"It's nearly dusk now. We can't possibly return to camp in time. Besides, we'd already planned for an overnight operation. Even if we light campfires and battle the Romans into the night, what is there to fear? On the contrary, the Romans have no reinforcements, no food, and have to fend off our attacks non-stop. Without us suffering heavy casualties, they'll eventually be worn down and defeated."

Hamilcar's reasoning swayed the leaders present, and Spartacus's suggestion was accepted.

They gathered their soldiers, forming ranks some distance behind the Third Battalion. They fetched food from their wagon trains, fed the soldiers, gave them water, and allowed them to rest briefly before sounding the retreat signal.

Spartacus and the others had anticipated resistance from the Third Battalion soldiers, engrossed as they were in their fierce battle, at the idea of retreating before the enemy. However, as soon as the signal blasted, the Third Battalion soldiers—exhausted and increasingly frustrated by their prolonged, fruitless engagement—immediately began to withdraw. Yet, being only two months into their training, they fell into significant disarray in the haste of their retreat.

Chapter 60: Chapter 59: The Supply Camp Recruits New Soldiers

The Roman Army did not seize the opportunity to counterattack because Cassinius, standing atop a large boulder, clearly saw the enemy's other units forming ranks behind them, so he cautiously maintained their defensive formation.

The soldiers of the Third Battalion retreated to the rear through a deliberate gap left by the other battalions, and the First Battalion immediately moved forward to replace them...

The rebel army employed revolving tactics, fighting the Roman Army until evening. Exhausted, starving, and utterly desperate, the Roman soldiers were finally routed.

In reality, when Cassinius saw nearly ten thousand rebel soldiers appear—half of them fully armed and obeying commands signaled by military horns—he knew that positioning his troops at the river's edge was tantamount to trapping himself. However, his role as the camp commander prevented him from leading a retreat in battle. Fighting to the death seemed to him a form of honor.

As the enemy broke through their formation and slaughtered fleeing soldiers in disarray, Cassinius let out a long sigh: "Damn the Senate, you've got yourselves a huge problem now!"

He drew his short sword, slashed it forcefully across his neck, and blood spurted forth in a crimson arc...

Led by Spartacus, the rebel army marched rapidly over long distances and fought two battles in one day, using their superior numbers to defeat 6,000 Roman Legion soldiers who had been divided into smaller groups. Most of the Roman soldiers were either annihilated or captured, with only a few managing to escape, while the rebels suffered just 2,000 casualties—a resounding victory.

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"What is your name?"

"Tini Bazus."

"How old are you?"

"Around twenty-six or twenty-seven."

"Around?"

"I'm an orphan. I never met my parents and don't know my date of birth."

"Oh... Do you have any relatives or family members among those joining us this time?"

"No."

"Where are you from? How did you become a slave?"

"I'm from Pontus. I didn't have a fixed home and wandered from place to place, performing for a living. During the war between Pontus and Rome, I was forcibly conscripted. Our army was defeated, and I was captured and sold into slavery..."

"Can you read?"

"No."

"Can you do calculations?"

"No."

"What can you do?"

"I can perform acrobatics, flipping seven or eight somersaults in a row, and I can walk a tightrope... Oh, and after coming to Rome, I also learned how to farm."

...

Vorenius, seated at the wooden desk, finally stopped writing, looked up at Tini Bazus, and smiled warmly. "Tini Bazus, welcome to our Supply Camp!"

"Supply Camp?" Tini Bazus asked with some confusion, "What does it do in your group?"

"You'll find out soon enough." Vorenius didn't provide a detailed answer but said somewhat mysteriously, "I'll just tell you this much—this time, you're lucky. Otherwise, getting here wouldn't have been easy for you. Now you can head out that way. Next!"

Somewhat bewildered, Tini Bazus followed the direction Vorenius had pointed to as he exited the military tent. Ahead, he saw another tent not far away. The slave who had been ahead of him in line was being roughly dragged away from the group by a fully armored soldier. The slave struggled and shouted, "I'm fine! Really, I'm fine!"

"The whip wounds on your back are already infected. If you delay any further, you'll soon get a fever. Stop resisting and come with me for treatment!" The soldier's persuasive tone managed to calm the struggling slave.

Tini Bazus stared blankly as the two walked toward the other side. A soldier standing in front of the tent couldn't help but shout, "Hey, what are you standing around for? Get over here already!"

Tini Bazus immediately ran to the front of the tent and couldn't help asking, "Where are they going?"

"To the Medical Team," the soldier replied with a glance. "If you've got injuries, you'll also need to go there soon enough."

"I don't have any," Tini Bazus quickly shook his head.

"Whether you do or not isn't for you to decide," the soldier said, urging him impatiently. "Get inside—don't keep them waiting!"

Tini Bazus entered the tent.

This time there were three people inside: one wearing a linen robe with a kind expression, another clad in armor with a rugged appearance, and a third who was a young boy.

The armored man, seeing him enter, grumbled disapprovingly, "Why are you so slow? Hurry up and take that tattered piece of clothing off!"

"Huh? Take my clothes off?!..." Tini Bazus froze.

The armored man glared, "Why aren't you moving faster?!"

Frightened, Tini Bazus hastily removed his linen outer garment, which was so worn that it barely held together.

The man in the linen robe immediately stepped forward, examining Tini Bazus from top to bottom with careful scrutiny, occasionally pressing firmly on different parts of his body and asking, "Does this hurt?"

Tini Bazus shook his head while instinctively using his hands to shield his body.

"Limbs are intact, no physical deformities, plenty of scars but no obvious internal injuries... Hmm, no major physical issues," the robed man said with a frown. "But you're extremely dirty. You'll need a thorough bath."

The armored man also scrutinized him closely before suddenly asking, "The scars on your chest—those are from blades, aren't they?"

"Yes."

"Have you served as a soldier before?"

"I was conscripted in Pontus, but only for half a year before the Romans defeated us and I became a slave."

The armored man grinned, "Half a year in the military—that's already more experience than most of the men in our group! What kind of soldier were you?"

"Phalanx spearman."

"Never heard of it before, but it sounds impressive," the armored man said, his grin widening. Approaching Tini Bazus, he pinched his arms and thighs before nodding in satisfaction. "You don't look particularly strong, but your muscles are dense and solid. You'll make an excellent heavy armor infantry soldier. Magus, take note—assign him to the Fifth Hundred-man Team as the leader of the First Squad."

"Captain Torrelugo!" the boy named Magus interjected loudly, "Leader Maximus specifically instructed that all team officer positions in these newly formed hundred-man teams must be filled by soldiers from the original three hundred-man teams!"

"But this guy has half a year of military experience and has seen real combat—that's better than many of my former soldiers. He's fully qualified to be a centurion," Torrelugo argued.

"Even so, it's against the leader's orders!" Magus firmly declined.

"You stubborn fool!" Torrelugo yelled angrily. "All you ever talk about is Maximus' rules! Maximus' rules! Is Maximus your father or something? Why are you so obedient to everything he says? Can't you show a little flexibility?!"

Magus stood his ground, retorting, "The leader said that rules are made to ensure everyone follows them. Only with discipline will the group become orderly. If everyone broke the rules, there'd be no point in having them at all!"

"There you go again!" Torrelugo exclaimed in frustration.

"Both of you, stop arguing," the robed man said, his experience with such disputes evident. He stepped in to mediate. "Captain Torrelugo, while this man does have military experience, he's new to the Supply Camp and unfamiliar with its workings. Without guidance, he might unknowingly break camp regulations, which would undermine his authority with his subordinates. I suggest letting him start as an ordinary soldier. Once he's gotten the hang of things and proven capable, you can promote him then. Wouldn't that be better?"

Torrelugo considered this for a moment before nodding. "You make a good point. Fine, let's do it that way. Magus, assign him to the Fifth Hundred-man Team, First Squad."

Magus complied and made a note of it.

Torrelugo then turned to the robed man with a suggestion. "Horace, with your skills, staying in the Medical Team is such a waste. Why not join me and pick either the Second or Fifth Hundred-man Team? You can be a centurion—what do you say?"

Horace smiled calmly, unmoved. "In the Medical Team, I don't have to push myself too hard, I have women for company, and I can study medicine under Minujus—that's what I desire most."

Torrelugo, rebuffed, didn't press further. Instead, he grabbed a small wooden token etched with a number from Magus and handed it to Tini Bazus. "Take this and follow the others ahead of you. Go to the warehouse to collect your supplies. Afterward, they'll guide you to the Fifth Hundred-man Team, First Squad, based on the markings on this token."